

Conservation Quarterly

Making a Measurable Impact

The Madison Soil and Water Conservation District is pleased to highlight some key accomplishments in 2017. Our mission is to enhance and sustain the wise use of natural resources through partnerships to provide research-based educational programs, technical assistance and funding to promote a clean local environment. Funding for the Madison Soil and Water Conservation District comes from the county commissioners and state legislators.

In 2017, with support from the county commissioners and a grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the District added a full time district technician to work with private landowners and operators to reduce sediment and nutrient loading and benefit the aquatic species in Upper Paint Creek and Mississippi River Basin. A total of 3,123 landowner contacts have been made through various outreach events, resulting in thirty-five conservation plans on 3,612 acres in Madison County. Six best management practices were designed and one was installed. A total of 984.6 acres have been set aside in waterways, filter strips and pollinator habitat. The resulting load reduction to date is 5,562 lb./year of P; 18,382 lb./year of N and 3,863 T/year of sediment.

Farmers are the working conservationists on private land. We appreciate their commitment to enhance wildlife habitat, improve soil health, and keep streams clean, while managing their land economically. We also thank the public—without the support of the people, these programs would not exist.

Conservation Implementation by Watershed

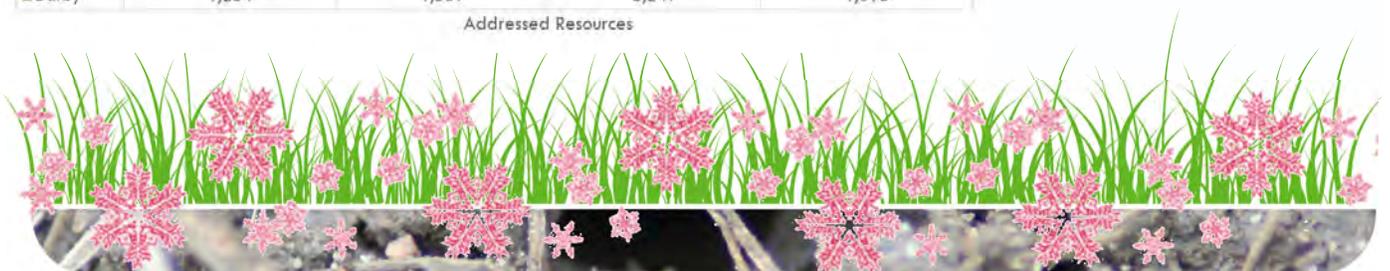


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Important Dates

- 2/9 OSU Farmers' Breakfast
- 2/13 SWCD Board Meeting
- 2/19 Presidents' Day (closed)
- 2/22 Deer Creek Streambank Restoration Work Day
- 3/9 OSU Farmers' Breakfast
- 3/13 SWCD Board Meeting
- 3/17 Come Grow with Us Garden Expo
- 3/20 First day of spring!



Remember to complete your winter seeding by February 28th*!

Landowners who are halfway through their Conservation Reserve Program contract have their grassland evaluated for health and diversity. Grassland fields need to be managed so that grasses do not crowd out the forbs and legumes over time.

Historically, wildfires would have helped to keep grasses in check and make space for the forbs. Today, one option for landowners is to interseed grass fields with forbs. This practice typically is used in conjunction with other mid-contract management techniques such as Light Disking, Prescribed Burning or Herbicide Application.

The purpose of interseeding forbs is to benefit the wildlife. The flowering plants help pollinators and harbor a lot of other insects that are a needed source of protein for the birds.

*Note: Deadline may be extended under certain circumstances.



USDA SIGN-UP FOR THE UPPER PAINT CREEK - MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN INITIATIVE (MRBI)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) awarded the Madison Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) a grant as part of the 2016 Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI). Titled the "Upper Paint Creek", this grant provides Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funds for producers in the focus area to complete conservation practices that improve overall soil health, reduce erosion, and curb nutrient leaching.

The project focus area encompasses ten sub-watersheds in the headwaters of the Upper Paint Creek Watershed which extends throughout portions of Madison, Greene, Fayette, Clinton, Clark and Highland Counties. These sub-watersheds in Madison County include: Headwaters of Paint Creek, Headwaters of Rattlesnake Creek, and Headwaters of Sugar Creek. These watersheds were selected areas as a result of Ohio EPA's designation as "impaired" due to excessive sediment and nutrients.

The program promotes various conservation practices including but not limited to: Cover crops, Buffer/Filter strips, Grassed waterways, Nutrient management, Tree/Shrub Establishment, Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, and Residue & Tillage Management.

Interested producers may submit applications for EQIP at any time. To be considered for funding this year, submit an application by March 16, 2018. Applications received by this date will be ranked according to their overall environmental benefit. Those providing the highest environmental benefit will be selected for funding. For more information or to request an application, visit the Madison County NRCS office located at 831 U.S. HWY 42 NE, London, OH 43140 or call (740) 852-4003.



Madison County MRBI Area



Madison County in the Top 5 for Ring-necked pheasant

Ring-necked pheasants were first introduced to Ohio in the 1890's and were considered established by 1916. Populations peaked in Ohio in the 1930s and 1940s. Following World War II, decades of change in agricultural practices and urban development eliminated or degraded the fallow fields, fence rows, and field dividers where this popular game bird was found.

Each Spring, Division of Wildlife staff complete roadside pheasant crow-count surveys in Carroll, Champaign, Columbiana, Defiance, Fairfield, Fayette, Fulton, Hardin, Logan, Madison, Marion, Pickaway, Richland, Ross, Union, Williams, and Wyandot Counties. Between late April into early May, there are a total of 44 surveys are conducted each year. A population index is calculated from the results of these surveys.

From these surveys, Ohio's pheasant population has declined steadily over the past several decades. In 2017 the population index derived from the spring crow-count survey was 0.14 pheasants per survey stop, the lowest since 2013 and 30% below the 10-year average of 0.20 pheasants per stop. Notable declines over the past decade have been observed in Champaign, Defiance, Logan, Marion, Union, and Wyandot Counties.

A total of 74 pheasants were observed among all routes statewide, with a statewide population index of 0.14 Top 5 counties in Ohio during 2017 included: Madison, Pickaway,

Williams, Fayette, and Ross. While most county population indices were relatively unchanged from 2016, notable population index declines were observed in Carroll (-67%), Union (-57%), Fayette (-54%), and Ross (-43%) counties.

With the assistance of Division of Wildlife private lands biologist and Madison Soil and Water Office, a plan can be developed to promote wildlife on private property. There are also funds that can be captured through various federal subsidies to offset the costs.

For help in creating pheasant habitat on your property, contact Wildlife Officer Matt Teders, 614-902-4216.



A new management option for CRP

A new management option was introduced this year for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts that are up for mid-term contract management. As opposed to the typical interseeding (see page 2), the default activity for contracts less than ten acres is the establishment of milkweed and/or other forbs using plugs.

About 230 acres will be eligible for this practice in Madison County alone. If you are interested in purchasing plugs, please call the Madison SWCD at 740-852-4003 to discuss your project. A list of nurseries is available; however, some vendors may only sell in bulk. The Madison SWCD will work with interested landowners to consolidate orders so that a better purchase price and diversity may be achieved.

Plug plants are "seedlings," but they are sometimes referred to as "plugs" because the small plants resemble plugs when they are removed from their celled nursery container.

The rate is one flat per acre and each flat has 32-48 plugs. A hand trowel will work for digging the hole!

Soil moisture and temperature are very important when planting milkweed and native forb plugs. Therefore, spring is generally the best time to plant plugs after the danger of frost has passed. September plantings may need extra attention to ensure plugs have adequate moisture.

See Pollinator Plugs page 5



OSU Extension Winter Programs

OSU Extension Madison County is offering a number of programs related to agriculture and natural resources. For more information, please visit Extension's website at madison.osu.edu, or contact Mary Griffith at 740-852-0975 or griffith.483@osu.edu.

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

COME GROW WITH US!

GARDEN EXPO 2018

Presented by Madison County Master Gardeners



Saturday
March 17, 2018

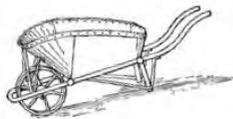
9 am - 3 pm

First Presbyterian Church
211 Garfield Avenue, London, Ohio

Visit the displays and vendors. See the backyard railroad garden. Children's activities and food available. Talk with a Master Gardener about your gardening problems. Free admission.

Programs –

- Luscious Lawns
- Let's Talk Flower Bulbs
- The Secret Life of Bugs
- Pollinator Habitat
- To Weed or Not to Weed



 THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

CFAES provides research and related educational programs to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis. For more information: go.osu.edu/cfaesdiversity.

Farmers' Breakfast Series

Join us for a free breakfast while learning about the latest information in agriculture from top Ohio experts! Breakfast begins at 8:30 a.m. followed by our guest speakers at 9 a.m. Breakfast is sponsored by Madison County Farm Bureau.

Pre-registration is required! To RSVP call 740-852-0975 or email griffith.483@osu.edu

-----Topics-----
February 9: Top Legal Issues that will Affect Ohio Agriculture in 2018 with Peggy Hall, OSU Extension Specialist, Agricultural Law

March 9: What's going on in Washington: 2018 Farm Bill and U.S. Ag. Committee Update with Fred Yoder, Trump Agricultural Advisory Committee



Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program

The Madison County Commissioners were awarded \$907,151 from the Ohio Department of Agriculture Clean Ohio Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program to purchase agricultural easements from willing landowners who wish to preserve his or her farm in perpetuity. An agricultural easement is a voluntary, permanent, legally binding restriction placed on a farm that limits the use of the land to predominantly agricultural activity. The application period began on January 18 and closes on March 30.

Farms with the highest scores are offered a price for their easement based on the score, not to exceed \$2,000/acre and \$500,000 total. The Madison County Commissioners would co-hold the easement with Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) and/or the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Farms will be monitored once per year to ensure compliance. Madison SWCD does not provide legal or financial advice. Landowners are encouraged to seek advice from their own advisors.

To apply, the farm must be: (1) at least 40 acres in size (or 10 – 39 acres if contiguous to existing protected land); (2) enrolled in the Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) program; and (3) enrolled in an Agricultural District.

The benefit of an agricultural easement is that the landowner owns the land and may sell, gift or otherwise convey it to others. In addition, the farm will remain in one piece because the landowner and future generations will not be able to subdivide the farm into smaller farms or houses once the agricultural easement is placed on it. One homestead is allowed per farm.

Costs associated with placing a conservation easement on the land will come out of closing or directly from the landowner. Some costs could be a new survey, an appraisal, title/closing services, and a 1% stewardship fee based on the purchase price of the easement.

The program is highly competitive and funding is not guaranteed. To apply, contact the Madison Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Please call Madison SWCD at (740) 852-4003 option 3 to make an appointment before March 30.

Pollinator plugs from page 3

Transplanted plugs, especially milkweed, often will go through some shock and may lose all of its leaves. If this happens, don't worry! The plant is trying to establish its roots and will eventually grow leaves again.

Landowners are encouraged to plant in clumps, rather than spreading the plugs evenly over the field. This will make management of the plugs easier. In the case of milkweed plugs, plant them 18"-24" apart so that Monarch caterpillars can travel to their next food.

For more information on purchasing and planting plugs, please call the Madison SWCD at 740-852-4003.

To apply

The farm must be:

- At least 40 acres in size (or 10 – 39 acres if contiguous to existing protected land);
- Enrolled in the Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) program; and
- Enrolled in an Agricultural District.



Plugs are seedlings that can be installed by hand without need for special equipment.



Welcome Linnea Rowse, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist



Linnea Rowse
952-451-0096
lrowse@pheasantsforever.org

Linnea Rowse recently joined Pheasants Forever as a Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist in central Ohio, for Champaign, Clark, Logan, Madison, and Union counties. She will be working out of the USDA service center offices in those counties, in partnership with the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service and Ohio Department of Natural Resources. She comes to Ohio from a recent position in northern New York, where she worked in a similar capacity to conserve young forest habitat for Golden-winged Warblers. Linnea received her B.S. in Wildlife and Conservation Biology from the University of Rhode Island in 2008, and her M.S. in Environment and Natural Resources from The Ohio State University in 2013.

She has been working in the wildlife and conservation field for 9 years, and has a wide variety of experience in wildlife ecology, with a special interest in bird conservation. When not in the office, you will find Linnea hiking, birding, and generally spending time outdoors. She looks forward to meeting and working with landowners to address resource concerns; Linnea is passionate about finding the intersection between agricultural production and soil, water, and wildlife conservation goals.

Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look what they can do when they stick together. ~Vista M. Kelly

Madison Soil and Water
Conservation District
831 US HWY 42 NE
London, Ohio 43140

Office Hours: 7:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Mondays through Fridays
Phone: 740-852-4003 opt. 3

<http://co.madison.oh.us/swcd/>
<https://www.facebook.com/madisonswcdohio>



Thank You, County Commissioners!

The Madison SWCD Board of Supervisors and Staff would like to thank County Commissioners David Dhume, Mark Forrest and David Hunter for their continuing support and dedication to conservation in our county. The financial assistance at the county level draws matching funds from the state that enables the District to continue to provide assistance to all Madison County residents.

Contact Us

Please contact Gail Wilson at gail.wilson@oh.nacdnet.net if you wish to be put on or removed from our email list. Your board members are Jonathan Francis, Chairman; Ramona Porter, Vice Chairman; Bob Hunter, Treasurer; Howard Yoder and David Junk. Your SWCD staff members are Julia Cumming, Program Administrator; Justin White, District Technician and Gail Wilson, Operations Coordinator. Your NRCS staff members are: Deba Mohler, District Conservationist; William Cook, Resource Conservationist; Mike Rakes, Soil Conservation Technician; Linnea Rowse, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist; and Jeremiah McDowell, Civil Engineering Technician. All NRCS/MSWCD programs and services are offered on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

