

Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission

April 22, 2015 – ODNR Building E-1

2045 Morse Road, Columbus, OH

APPROVED Meeting Summary

Call to Order (10:05 am)

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call Commission Members Present

Chairman Tom Price

Vice-Chairman Fred Cash

Etta Reed

Larry Vance

Ex-Officio Members Present

Kevin Elder

Kris Swartz

Mike Bailey

Additional Attendees

Mike Bailey (ODNR-DSWR); Kirk Hines (ODNR-DSWR); Lisa Syx (ODNR-DSWR); Ronda Tipton (ODNR-DSWR); Chad Amos (ODNR-DSWR); Liz Cline (ODNR-DSWR); Clark Hutson (ODNR-DSWR); Jennifer Fish (Franklin SWCD); Terry Cosby (NRCS); Cheryl Rice (NRCS); Mindy Bankey (OFSWCD); Brandi Koehler (USDA-FSA); Mike Libben (OASWCDE); Holly Utrata-Halcomb (Hamilton SWCD); Bonnie Dailey (Delaware SWCD)

Welcome

Chairman Price called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and asked if there were any additions or changes to the day's meeting agenda as presented.

Action: Fred Cash moved to accept the April 22, 2015 meeting agenda as presented. Etta Reed seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Price then asked if there any additions or corrections to the February 18, 2015 draft meeting minutes, as presented. Larry Vance suggested typing out acronyms in future minutes.

Action: Fred Cash moved to approve the February 18, 2015 meeting minutes as presented. Larry Vance seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Commission Member Reports

Larry Vance noted the recent passing of Chase Heyman of Huron County.

Fred Cash recognized Dorothy Farris, noting he was very impressed with the job she was doing, appreciating all the hard work she has done and is doing regarding the Match Task Force and OSWCC.

Etta Reed had nothing to report.

Kris Swartz had nothing to report.

Kevin Elder had nothing to report.

Tom Price had nothing to report.

Recognition of Guests and Public Comment

Chairman Price opened the floor to anyone that would like to provide public comment.

Holly Utrata-Halcomb, Hamilton SWCD. Holly comments expressed that the SWCD is proud to be part of the uniquely qualified network of all 88 Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The strength of all of our Soil and Water Conservation Districts has always been our ability to respond to critical local issues. This is how local funding is secured. The State match provides further incentive to bring local dollars back to the home County. Urban Counties contribute a lion's share of the State tax dollar based on population and economic activity. But, the size of our population and land use creates a whole host of challenges in conserving our soil & water resources. (Holly's full comments are attached). Holly also shared a SWCD brochure on the 4R brochure to demonstrate that these concepts were as relevant in the urban sector as the rural.

Jennifer Fish, Franklin SWCD. Jennifer's comments focused on that the SWCD is becoming increasingly concerned about the equity of funding and support to more urbanized soil and water conservation districts. This concern relates to several recent developments including the qualified exception to Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District placing our municipal funds into the District Fund, the movement of Division of Soil and Water Resources staff to ODA, and a recent challenge by our county auditor's office to the paraphrasing of ORC in the recently updated state match policy document. (Jennifer's full comments are attached below)

Chairman Price thanked the guests for attending.

OSWCC Appointments

Four requests were presented to the Commission to consider appointments to SWCD boards.

Action: A motion was made by Etta Reed to approve all 4 appointments (*John Chacey to fill the vacated seat of Debra Walton of Licking SWCD; Harold Martin to fill the vacated seat of Michael Bauer of Licking SWCD; Louann Holmes to fill the vacated seat of Robert Wuertz, Jr. of Morrow SWCD who passed away and Gary Willison to fill the vacated seat of Curt Cline of Athens SWCD who has resigned.* Larry Vance seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Joint Boards

Next, the OSWCC considered the approval of one request for joint boards.

Action: Larry Vance moved to approve the request from Hancock SWCD and Putnam SWCD and to form a joint board for the S.W. Boyer Joint County Ditch Watershed Project. Etta Reed seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

OSWCC Action and Discussion Items

Legislative Update – SB 1: Mike Bailey provided a review of Senate Bill 1, which was recently signed into law by Governor Kasich on April 2nd. SB 1 establishes limitations on when farmers can apply manure and fertilizer within the Western Lake Erie Basin when the ground is frozen, snow-covered or saturated. The law will also provide the opportunity for small and medium sized producers to request exemptions for up to 2 years in order to have additional time to comply. ODNR will be administering the portion of the bill relative to livestock manure, and ODA will be administering a similar provision for commercial fertilizer. Both ODA and ODNR will be filing implementing rules later this summer.

Joint SWCD Board Task Force Report: Dorothy Farris presented the final recommendations of the Joint SWCD Board Taskforce. She provided an overview of the meetings and how the group came to consensus on the recommendations. The OSWCC members asked that a survey of SWCDs favorability of the recommendations be conducted similar to the one conducted for the Match Policy.

SWIMS: Dorothy Farris provided the OSWCC members with samples of the board reports and statewide reports that can be queried from SWIMS. Martin Joyce shared update on SWIMS and also provided the results of the recent FIT Analysis, the need for updating the software, the pros and cons. He is currently talking with different consultants to compare what is available; Martin also provided a PowerPoint presentation and handouts to members. Questions were taken and what the next steps are were discussed.

July OSWCC Meeting and Tour: Rob Hamilton reviewed draft agenda for the July OSWCC tour and registration procedures. Lisa Syx provided overview of reimbursement procedures.

Agency Reports

USDA-NRCS: Terry Cosby – Discussed the April RCPP meeting held in Ft. Wayne in conjunction with the River Summit. Bi-weekly RCPP teleconferences are still being held to discuss roll-out of RCPP. Secretary Vilsack announced the application period for ACEP/ALE on March 31 with an application deadline of May 15, 2015. Discussed the Collaborative Oak Management in the Ohio Appalachian Mountains. NRCS approved EQIP funding for the Upper Ohio Brush Creek under the MRBI and includes land in Adams, Brown and Highland counties. Terry Cosby discussed vacancies and other personnel items. Cheryl Rice is acting ASTC Special Projects for 120 days.

ODA: Kevin Elder – ODA has hired two new inspectors, they are up to 4 inspectors at this time.

OEPA: Nothing to report

ODNR-DSWR: Chief Mike Bailey - Nothing to report

OASWCDE: Mike Libben – Introduced himself as the new president of the Ohio Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Employees. He also remarked that the newly elected board of directors were working on several initiatives to promote SWCD employee development.

Being no further business before the commission, Etta Reed moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:45 a.m. Larry Vance seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Holly Utrta-Halcomb Address to OSWC 4-22-15

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors and staff of Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, I want to express that we are proud to be part of the uniquely qualified network of all 88 Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The strength of all of our Soil and Water Conservation Districts has always been our ability to respond to critical local issues. This is how local funding is secured. The State match provides further incentive to bring local dollars back to the home County. Urban Counties contribute a lion's share of the State tax dollar based on population and economic activity. But, the size of our population and land use creates a whole host of challenges in conserving our soil & water resources.

Coming from a county with some of the highest erodible soils and having the second highest spending per capita on landslide remediation, our SWCD plays a major role in hillside stability and erosion and sediment control. We also have been a major player in water quality monitoring and conservation education. Because we have no natural lakes in our county, we may not see a Microcystic outbreak as other parts of the state have seen, but that is not to say we do not have serious nutrient pollution issues in our watersheds. The Ohio River is the recipient of 2/3 of our state waterways. This of course drains down to the Gulf of Mexico and contributes to the ever-growing hypoxic zone.

Nutrient pollution is not just an agriculture issue. We are famous for saying "Watersheds have no jurisdictional boundaries". Yet, focusing State funding and Federal cost-share dollars only on certain regional agriculture activity is doing just that.

One must also question "where is the social equity?" Urban areas have a higher % of minorities. Urban populations are further removed from nature. If we do not educate and engage these citizens in conservation behavior it will result in an opportunity lost and perpetuate this attitude in future generations – your future taxpayers, voters and leaders.

Many innovation and new conservation techniques were born in urban counties. For instance,

- Our SWCD has been teaching the 4-Rs by offering soil fertility testing **and interpretations** for the past 12 years. From this data, which we have mapped and inputted onto a GIS layer, we know that our pH and Phosphorus levels tends to be high and our Potassium levels are low. We have helped thousands of citizens reduce their nutrient inputs through this program.
- We were the first to offer urban landowners cover crop seed.

- We are in our third year of water quality research with the University of Cincinnati and Texas A&M on the effectiveness of cover crops in reducing nutrient pollution. But, our farmers are not eligible for NRCS cost share on cover crops as are their agriculture county counterparts.
- We were the first County to organize children's Water Festivals in 1995 and guided many other SWCD's to organize the same. Currently, this program is now called Paddlefest. It draws 10s of thousands of people and is the largest event of its kind in the country.
- We were the first to launch a multi-county, multi state mass media water quality campaign.
- The first to conduct storm drain labeling and watershed signage – county-wide.
- We collaborated in writing a SW Ohio Rain Garden Manual specifically for our soils.

I am certain; each County SWCD can also provide a litany of accomplishments that speak to their critical local issues. This brings us back to the unique and valuable nature of SWCDs. We should be different, but not one more important than the other. Let's make sure the funding reflects that.

Urban Counties have serious concerns over the "rumored" move our ODNR Division to ODA. What will this change mean for urban counties? What is the content of the "rumored" proposed changes to ORC 1515? Why are we only hearing "rumors"? The strength of our SWCD's comes from our publicly elected Boards of Supervisors. The Ohio Federation of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (OFSWCD) draws representation from all five areas of Ohio. They have always been involved in advising and making decisions on the direction of our SWCDs. It appears that they also are shut out of this critical process that will decide our future. Rumors create fear and misconceptions. Can you, the Commission get answers to these questions?

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I hope this will spur further discussion.

OSWCC Commission Meeting
Wednesday, April 22

Comments provided on behalf of Franklin SWCD Board of Supervisors by Jennifer Fish, Director

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District is becoming increasingly concerned about the equity of funding and support to more urbanized soil and water conservation districts. This concern relates to several recent developments including the qualified exception to Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District placing our municipal funds into the District Fund, the movement of Division of Soil and Water Resources staff to ODA, and a recent challenge by our county auditor's office to the paraphrasing of ORC in the recently updated state match policy document.

Franklin Soil and Water supports a strong network of 88 soil and water conservation districts. We have accepted a reduction in state match funding available to us and supported the idea that there needs to be a sustainable increase in the amount of base level funding available to all districts. We also recommended a hard cap on state match funding available to districts that was based on population and prior years' funding, so that the state match percentage was more protected from unexpected changes from year to year. Franklin Soil and Water staff continues to provide assistance, resources and even presentations to other SWCD's when requested and enthusiastically share our resources and expertise. Staff also values the expertise from our other SWCD partners.

Franklin Soil and Water wants more recognition that urban districts represent a larger population, have access to more resources and, as a result, are sometimes able to come up with good solutions and ideas that can benefit all 88 districts. Because we represent a larger population we conduct more business and discover potential issues with SWCD procedures and policies. Because we have more business we need to innovate. There needs to be districts that can lead the way to more innovation and opportunities to the benefit of all Ohioans. All too often the feedback we get is that we are in the minority on our requests, most districts do not have an issue with how things are, or that we are a threat to state match funding overall.

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District supports and is proud to be part of the larger SWCD network. We believe we can help improve overall funding for the districts and can support legislation to update Ohio Revised Code with the support of a majority of the Districts with our combined support at the State Legislator. We realize these two needs are not directly the function of the OSWCC, but support from members of the state match committee and individual members on the commission are important. Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors and Director will be more committed to provide a larger voice to this end, and plan to do so with the greatest amount of respect, equitability, and consideration for all of Ohio's 88 districts and the soil and water leadership. The strength of SWCD's is that we are the bridge to address natural resource concerns across political boundaries and between urban and rural communities. Any support or feedback to this end that the commission or ODNR leadership can provide to us will be welcomed and appreciated.