

# Conservation Quarterly

## SWCD election and annual meeting highlights

Bob Hunter and AJ Schmitt won the election for supervisor at the Madison Soil and Water Conservation District. The election period began with the Madison SWCD annual meeting on August 19th at the Gwynne Conservation Area and finished on September 17th. Jonathan Francis and Nancy Denes-Sparks also ran. A total of 57 ballots were cast in the election.

Thirty-two people attended the annual meeting, which celebrated accomplishments in local land stewardship. Two conservation awards were presented.

The first award was the Top Ranked County Team in the Envirothon Competition for Southwest Ohio. The Envirothon is a competitive, academic, outdoor team event for high school students which test their knowledge in five areas: Forestry, Aquatics, Current Environmental Issues, Soils, and Wildlife. Due to COVID, it was a virtual event in 2021. Mike Harkleroad, Team Advisor, accepted the award at the meeting on behalf the students from West Jefferson High School (below).



*Students Tennessee Jennings, Graham Gardner (captain), Jessica Fling, Olivia Foreman, and Riley Marshall, were awarded the top-ranked Madison County team at the Envirothon Competition for Southwest Ohio.*

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### Important Dates

- 10/30 Milkweed Pod Collection ends, SWCD Office
- 11/10 Board meeting
- 11/11 Veteran’s Day (office closed)
- 11/25-11/26 Thanksgiving Days (office closed)
- 12/8 Board Meeting
- 12/24 Christmas Day observed (office closed)
- 12/31 New Year’s Day observed (office closed)



## Annual Meeting

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The second award went to Corey Phillippi as Madison County Cooperator of the Year. The Cooperator of the Year award is a statewide recognition program that recognizes those who do an outstanding job of conserving our natural resources. Corey Philippi recently preserved his 53-acre farm in perpetuity with the Clean Ohio Farmland Preservation Program. He planted a native grass filter strip along Glade Run and made the switch to no-till farming about eight years ago.



The meeting started with a guided wagon tour by Matt Sullivan, Farm Science Review Manager, and concluded with a delicious picnic supper by All in Flavor Café and Sweets.

*The guided wagon tour of the Gwynne Conservation Area was one of the meeting's highlights. From left to right: Matt Sullivan, Farm Science Review Manager; Bob Hunter, SWCD Supervisor; Ramona Porter, Steve Davis, SWCD Supervisor, and Jeri Severt.*

## Is your soil healthy?

When we get a yearly checkup, the doctor always encourages us to adopt healthier habits. Did you ever consider that you can adopt healthier habits for your soil, too? We need our soil to be healthy because healthy soil is the key to meeting the growing demands for food, feed, fiber, and fuel around the world. Estimates are that the earth will need to support nine billion people by 2050!

How do we get our soil to be healthy? Soil test! Soil testing is an easy and relatively inexpensive planning tool. What are you growing and what nutrients are needed for the best production? A soil test reveals the current status of your soil and provides data essential to smart decision making. Applying too much or the wrong kinds of fertilizers can harm your crop, squander your hard-earned money, and waste your time and energy. Overapplication of soil amendments can result in runoff and leaching of fertilizers into our streams, rivers, and lakes or into our groundwater.

Reach out to the SWCD and OSU Extension for information on taking a soil sample, developing nutrient recommendation, and interpreting a soil report. Be the change for clean water. Know your soil. Don't guess, soil test.



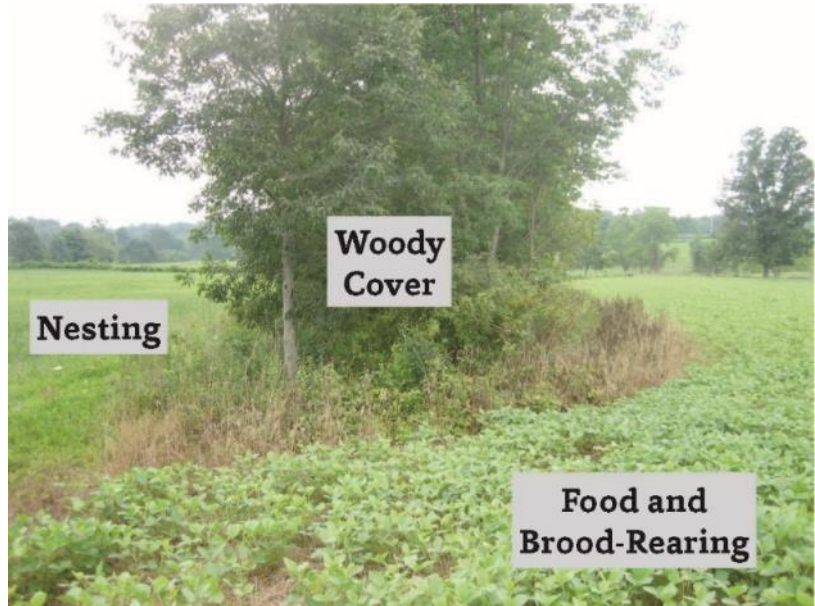
## “EQIP” your land for quail

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program through NRCS that helps agricultural producers protect the environment while promoting agricultural production. One priority of the program in our region focuses specifically on inadequate habitat for wildlife. Tree/shrub establishment, upland wildlife habitat management, vegetative barriers, and windbreak shelterbelt renovations are all types of management practices that can be supported technically and financially through the EQIP program for qualifying landowners. These management practices have beneficial outcomes for our northern bobwhite quail populations in the state.

The northern bobwhite quail has seen a dramatic population decline over the past several decades, with some estimates as high as 80%. This decline can be attributed to the increase in agricultural field size, degradation of edge habitat, and the trends toward “cleaner” farming techniques. Northern bobwhite quail thrive in early successional stages of habitat, meaning the transition areas between dense cover and open ground. This type of habitat enables the quail to find protection from predators and ample insects and seeds for forage and raising chicks.

Creating and maintaining effective wildlife habitat can be easily done without sacrificing productive agricultural practices. Quail habitat management on your land relies as much on what you don’t do as what you do. Many plant species beneficial to quail already exist in the seed bank and leaving them to grow in areas that are not or should not be actively farmed will provide important habitat to local quail populations.

If you are interested in creating or enhancing beneficial wildlife habitat on your property through the EQIP program, contact the Madison Soil and Water Conservation District or your local NRCS District Conservationist for more program details.



*The northern bobwhite quail thrives in areas where cropland and pasture intersect woodland areas. Farming has become “cleaner,” leaving fewer transitional buffer areas between the crops and the woods for nesting and cover. Not mowing is one way to provide habitat for quail.*



## Common milkweed pod collection ends October 30th

Did you know that milkweed is the most important plant for the monarch butterfly? Milkweed is referred to as a “host” plant for the monarch, meaning their survival is dependent on finding and utilizing these colorful native plants. The disappearance of milkweed across the U.S. has contributed to the 80% decline of the Eastern monarch butterfly population over the last 20 years.



You can help bring back the monarchs by collecting dry, grey, or brown pods from the common milkweed, placing them into a paper bag (label with county and date), and keeping them in a cool dry area until you can deposit them in the collection bin in the front of Madison SWCD office at 831 US HWY 42 NE, London, Ohio, from September 15 – October 31.

- ⇒ When collecting seed pods, it is best to pick them when they are dry and gray or brown in color. If the center seam pops with gentle pressure, they are ready to be picked.
- ⇒ Leave some pods (10-25%) on the plants so that seeds have a chance to naturally disperse and do their job as an important food source for milkweed bugs and other critters.
- ⇒ Do not pick pods when they are green. The seeds inside will not be viable.

Once collected, the pods will be processed with the help of prison horticultural programs and the seed planted in pollinator projects across Ohio. With your help, we will see our skies full of these amazing butterflies once again. For more information about this program or how to establish pollinator habitat on your own property, contact Broc Sehen, SWCD District Technician, at (740) 852-4003.

### Contact us

#### Board of Supervisors

David Junk, Chairman  
Howard Yoder, Vice Chairman  
Bob Hunter, Treasurer  
Jonathan Francis  
Steve Davis

#### NRCS Staff

Brianna Matthies, Resource Conservationist  
James Tillman, District Conservationist

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