

Conservation Quarterly

Can't Beat Free at the SWCD!

Soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) are the local hub of natural resources information and assistance for each county. Each one is committed to conservation in both rural and urban settings. We assist farmers to rescue and restore fertile farmland. We educate developers about the need for erosion control. We help landowners to create wildlife habitat on their property. We partner with anyone interested in keeping our communities sustainable and our water clean.

Do you have a soil, water or other natural resource concern? Many of our services are offered for free! Since 1947, we have been helping landowners solve their natural resources issues. Let us serve you!



We help fix gullies! We provide the information and assistance a landowner needs to install a grassed waterway. A grassed water waterway is a permanent vegetation strip that conveys water without additional erosion or sediment.



Inside this issue

Can't Beat Free at the SWCD	1
Conservation Partners Program.....	2
Highlights from the 2021 Annual Plan of Work	2
Issues with Invasives.....	3
Be on the Lookout for a New Form	4
Contact Us	4

Important Dates

2/14	Valentine's Day
2/21	Presidents Day (office closed)
2/28 - 3/1	Annual Partnership Meeting
3/9	SWCD Board Meeting
3/18	LAEPP Application Period end

Conservation Partners Program

At the end of 2021, Madison SWCD finished a three-year grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to sustain a full-time employee to provide technical assistance, lead outreach meetings and distribute educational materials for the resources landowners need to create habitat for the northern bobwhite quail, improve water quality and conserve their natural resources. In addition, because of the support of the county commissioners and an increase in state match, the Madison SWCD was able to hire a second technician trained in AutoCAD for the survey and design of best management practices to improve water quality.

While reflecting on the progress made in the last three years, the pandemic was unexpected. It led to some innovation such as virtual workshops and a new website; however, it made outreach challenging for us and all our partners as we navigated through the uncertainty of doing our activities safely.

For example, the Pasture Virtual Walk video was something we would not have normally done if it was not for the pandemic. We asked Mary Griffith, OSU Extension Educator, and Jason Jones, Grasslands & Grazing Coordinator for Ohio, to film a video to show producers that planting warm season grasses for their cattle was attainable, manageable and profitable. We were able to reach a national audience by showing the [video](#) at the Farm Science Review and it continued to be used as a training resource for new technicians in Ohio after the event was completed.

During the life of the grant, a total of 9,385 landowners contacts were made through various outreach events, resulting in 103 field visits, affecting 1,939 acres of land, and 48 best management practices installed on 684 acres. We look forward to continuing the work that was started and building new customer relationships!

Highlights from the 2021 Annual Plan of Work

What happened in 2021? Grassed waterways continued to be the number one best management practice installed in Madison County. We cheered for our 25th farmland preservation easement installed in the county. We debuted a new website. Below are more accomplishments from our Annual Plan of Work.

HIGHLIGHTS Healthy Soil and Water Viable Farmland Community Outreach		Grassed Waterways 12 Filterstrips 10 Pasture plantings 3	
	Agricultural Easement Installations 4 Easement Inspections 22 Urban - Lot Plan Reviews 26		Social Media Posts 40 News releases 28 Calls, emails, walk-ins 89 Website (new) 1,041
			

Issues with Invasive Species

Most Ohioans are familiar with honeysuckle, the fast-growing tree/shrub that produces small red berries in the fall and holds its green leaves longer than most other species. However not every Ohioan knows that this is an invasive species. An invasive species is defined by the federal government as “any species non-native to the ecosystem under consideration and, whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.”

Amur honeysuckle was first introduced to the U.S. from Manchuria and marketed as an ornamental shrub in 1897. The shrubs are shade, drought, and cold tolerant making them fierce competitors to native plant species. Over time, Amur honeysuckle has created dense stands that crowd and shade out all competing native species, lowering biodiversity across the country. The shrub also produces prolific amounts of berries that are carried and distributed across the landscape by birds, however these berries are considered natural ‘junk food’ because of their high sugar content but low nutrient and fat content which birds need to survive the winter. New research has also found that Amur honeysuckle can secrete chemical compounds that are harmful to amphibians and toxic to freshwater insects and crustaceans.



Figure 1 Wooded area before and after honeysuckle removal. Photo courtesy of Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

In most cases, invasive species spread through two ways. The natural route, such as by animals or wind currents, or by the effects of human activity. These man-made changes are categorized as intentional, which implies deliberate movement of a species into a non-native ecosystem, and unintentional, which is considered a byproduct of some other human activity, such as ships emptying ballast water. With this knowledge, landowners can become proactive in reducing the spread and managing concerns related to invasive species .

The Madison Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help landowners control invasive species on their land. There are multiple practices to reduce the spread and establishment of invasive species, including integrated pest management, prescribed burning, and wildlife habitat management. For information and assistance, contact the Madison SWCD at (740) 852-4003 and ask for Broc Sehen, District Technician-Wildlife Specialist, or find your local NRCS office at [nrcs.usda.gov](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov).



Be on the Lookout for a New Form

If you are a producer or landowner who participates in USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) may be reaching out by mail with information about a form you'll need to fill out.

Starting this year, all producers and landowners participating or applying to participate in certain NRCS conservation programs must complete form CCC-902, Farm Operating Plan. Historically, to participate in these programs, legal entities could file either the CCC-901, Member Information or the CCC-902, while individuals were not specifically required to file the CCC-902 with FSA. Now, to ensure FSA and NRCS are properly determining payment eligibility and maximum payment limitations, all customers must have a CCC-902 on file to establish eligibility.

These changes will not affect participants who already have a Form CCC-902 with a "determined" status recorded with FSA. Customers that do not have a CCC-902 on file with FSA will be sent a letter in the mail in the coming weeks with detailed information on what is needed and how to file the form. The letter requests that the form be completed within 30 days of receiving the letter.

For added convenience, USDA is offering options for remote or in-person submission of the CCC-902. Fiscal year 2021 is considered a transition year to ensure all NRCS program participants can meet this updated filing requirement. Beginning in FY 2022, if form CCC-902 is not on file your payments may be impacted.

We can help: NRCS and FSA staff are available at [USDA Service Centers](#) nationwide to provide information and assistance to walk you through meeting this filing requirement. For more information, see the [NRCS National Bulletin 300-21-7](#) or [FSA Notice PL-293](#).

Contact us

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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. Please contact Gail Wilson at gail.wilson@oh.nacdnet.net if you wish to be put on or removed from our email list.

