



Conservation Connection

Fall 2023

What's in a Name?

Kelly Crout, District Director

As we mentioned in our past newsletters, social media posts, and at our annual meeting, our District after 81 years is finally going through a marketing and rebranding process. In September, we were fortunate enough to have KR Creative, who is working on our marketing and rebranding, come in-person to our office for a day. The first part of the day consisted of giving them a tour of our county so they could know what Butler County looks like, what our townships and cities look like, what our landscape looks like, special landmarks or notes of history. In order to help KR Creative understand who Butler County in SW Ohio is, what Butler SWCD is, and who we are. The remainder of the day was spent going over our brand audit, looking at imagery, colors, icons, and fonts—all of which convey a certain feeling. We also worked on elevator pitches.

So why do I share this with you? Well, because without you we wouldn't be here, so it's important that you know what we are doing. The biggest challenge is our name, Butler Soil & Water Conservation District. It's a mouthful and a lot of letters when trying to put on letterhead, apparel, or just a basic logo. During our meeting with KR Creative we discussed our name and should we shorten it? Other Districts have, at least to the public. The other question, which words are the most important in our name? Is it Butler, the location we serve, is it soil or water, or is it conservation, which encompasses everything?

So, what's in a name? Ours is six words, 35 letters, and 1 special character, but each piece is important in its own way. So no, we won't be changing our name, but hopefully after our marketing and rebranding, we will better understand who we are and ultimately all of you will know our name and what we stand for.

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Newsletter Sponsor Form

To purchase advertisement space in our quarterly newsletter for 2024, please fill out the information below for one of the following options and return to our office by **Friday, January 12, 2024**.

1.) Remove advertisement for _____, which will not be renewed.

2.) Keep current advertisement for _____
(Check One) _____ without any changes, or _____ with the following changes:

3.) Please place new advertisement for _____

Contact Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Please send business card with this form. Graphics will be included as space allows.

The space is approximately 2.5" x 1.5" in size, and the price for the year is \$125. Please send form and check payable to Butler SWCD, 1802 Princeton Road, Suite 300, Hamilton, Ohio 45011. If you have any questions at all please reach out to our office by calling (513) 887-3720 or emailing hillsa@butlercountyohio.org.

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Ohio Stormwater Awareness Week


Ashlee Widener, Water Resource Specialist

Stormwater Awareness Week ran from October 1st to October 7th in Ohio. Stormwater Awareness Week is a statewide effort that encourages communities to raise awareness about stormwater through social media posts, newsletters, and educational events. Residents were encouraged to get involved in activities that promote stormwater awareness like neighborhood litter cleanups, construction or maintenance of rain gardens, social media posts, or native tree and plant installations.

Stormwater runoff is created when rainfall or snowmelt flows over land into storm drains and eventually into our local streams, rivers, and lakes. Precipitation will soak into the soil if it falls on a grassy or forested area. In urban or developed areas, precipitation will not soak in and will instead flow off of the hard surfaces like pavement or rooftops, known as impervious surfaces. After heavy precipitation events in areas with lots of impervious surface, an increased amount of rain water will enter our local waterways, potentially causing flash floods and stream erosion concerns.

Stormwater is typically collected in a system of storm drains on streets and pipes underground. The stormwater runoff will flow into these drains and is piped directly to outflows in local ponds, streams, and rivers. In Butler County, it is illegal to dump anything besides rain water down storm drains. Anything that gets dumped down these drains will go straight to local waterways and can cause pollution. If you have any questions or spot illegal dumping, you can call the Butler County Storm Water District at (513)785-4120.

As a resident, you may wonder why celebrating Stormwater Awareness Week is important to you. As mentioned before, stormwater runoff eventually flows into our local streams and rivers. Anything that is left on pavement, like trash or chemicals, will end up in local waterways. This will not only negatively impact aquatic communities and recreational opportunities like swimming and boating, but this can also impact drinking water sources. Many communities get their drinking water from local waterways like the Ohio River. Residents can take steps to reduce their stormwater impact just by keeping trash picked up and storm drains clear of debris, using chemicals wisely, cleaning up pet waste, or volunteering at a cleanup. Do your part and stay stormwater smart!




OHIO STORMWATER AWARENESS WEEK

October 1st-7th, 2023

Clean Streams Start With You!


What we do at home and work affects water quality. You can help keep water clean by:

- ♦ Planting native plants and trees.
- ♦ Properly disposing of chemicals and hazardous waste.
- ♦ Keeping storm drains clear of debris like leaves & litter.
- ♦ Always picking up and throwing away pet waste.
- ♦ Volunteering at or organizing a stream or roadside cleanup.



Scan the QR code to learn more & get involved!

ohiostormwaterweek.org



This year, Stormwater Awareness Week ran from October 1st—7th. Residents in the State of Ohio were encouraged to get involved in their community by scanning the QR code above. Every October, stay tuned for Stormwater Awareness Week and volunteer opportunities. Butler SWCD puts on several volunteer events throughout the year related to stormwater, like clean-ups and storm drain labeling. Keep an eye on our website, Facebook, and newsletter!

Dam Removal

Maddy Miner, Education Intern

All over the world, many dams are considered a great tourist attraction, especially ones of impressive size, like the Hoover Dam in Boulder City, Nevada. While some dams serve an important purpose, other dams no longer have any use and can cause more harm than good. Historically, dams have been built to control and store water for a variety of domestic uses, such as farming, industry, household, and generating electricity. They also aid in flood prevention and river navigation. There are several dams in Butler County that were built for recreation, hydropower, and milling purposes.

The United States has approximately 92,000 dams averaging 61 years in age. Over time, the quality or need for dams can diminish, oftentimes with the costs of maintaining them increasing as they age. In various regions of the world, communities are reconsidering their dam usage and the functions they serve. A growing number of communities are removing their dams for a variety of economic, ecological, or structural reasons.



Acton Lake Dam, Four Mile Creek

Although they can be useful, dams harm the landscape, wildlife, and the water quality around them. Many migrating fish populations have decreased, with some nearing extinction, especially in the western United States with salmon and trout populations. Vegetation in the surrounding areas is impeded, and overall biologic productivity decreases with the flow of nutrients and sediments hindered. Sediments can back up behind the dam and impact water quality and embed important rocky substrates making them no longer accessible to fish and bugs for habitat. Dams can impound the section of stream behind them, negatively impacting habitat like riffles and fast flowing water. Dams also pose a severe recreational threat to boaters and swimmers alike. The water that flows over the dam can create a reverse turbulent current that can create a dangerous drowning zone. The negative effects of dams can worsen as a dam ages; they become

more economically inefficient in terms of maintenance, repair, and upkeep.



Dam at Silvoor Biological Sanctuary, City of Oxford

Dam removal is crucial to the preservation and quality of river and stream ecosystems. It restores a river's natural flow, vegetation, and wildlife habitats which increase biodiversity. Removing a dam also removes a fish passage barrier and encourages migration upstream. Additionally, it can add aesthetic value back to the environment and allows for more recreational activities. Removing dams improves water quality and likewise can recharge essential groundwater aquifers. Unfortunately, some dams cannot be removed, as they protect important infrastructure, like sewer crossings. In this case, some dams can be modified and can include fish ladders and other fish passage creations to improve fish migration.

Here in Butler County, there are several dams on many different streams and rivers. There are several dams along the Great Miami River managed by the Miami Conservancy District that help with flood protection and prevention. MCD's flood protection system of the five dams, storage basins, and levees have protected several cities along the Great Miami River from flooding. These dams finished construction in 1922 and have protected communities from disastrous flooding, like the 1913 flood. There are also several dams along Four Mile Creek built for past milling and recreational purposes. Acton Lake was created by the damming of Four Mile Creek in 1956, one of the largest dams in the county. While some of these dams serve a current purpose, some that no longer serve a purpose have a potential for removal. There are several federal and state grant opportunities that help fund dam removal projects, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Fish Passage program, Ohio EPA 319 funds, the Ohio River Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, and more. Butler SWCD is one of the many agencies working on important dam removal projects in the county to help benefit local streams and their biological communities, including in the Four Mile Creek watershed and the Upper Dry Fork watershed.

Fall is the time for... Seed Collection!

Brady Smith, Rural Specialist

Many native species are going to seed in the fall; wildflowers and tree species are releasing their seed crop from the year to ensure the survival of their species. Native plants release seeds in the fall for two reasons. The first and most common reason is vernalization. Vernalization is a cold stratification process many seeds go through to ensure a higher germination rate and accelerate flowering. Many plants from apple trees, berries, wheat, milkweed, and oak trees are all dependent on this natural phenomenon to germinate and grow. The second most common reason is seed dispersal. Some seeds are carried by animals, such as squirrels and other rodents while other “fluffy” seeds are carried by wind and spread out across the landscape.

With so many plants dropping seeds now is a great time to take advantage of this and harvest seeds for habitat restoration projects. The advantage to harvesting seeds on your own is you can obtain seeds from local sources, sometimes called local ecotypes, which are better suited for regional climates, soil types, and other general growing conditions. It is important to collect seeds as soon as possible to avoid weather and pest damage.



An example of common milkweed pods; on the left fully ripe and ready for harvest, while the right is not ready.

One of the most important things to consider is, are the seeds ripe? Harvesting seeds too early could mean they weren't mature enough to even be considered viable and could lead to some or all of them spoiling in storage. We experience this every year in our annual milkweed seed collection. Someone undoubtedly is going to harvest an entire garbage bag full of completely green milkweed that isn't mature enough and it's going to start to rot and smell up the entire building! I cannot stress this enough, please make sure the seed you are harvesting is mature and dry, especially if you are donating it to use for restoration projects.

There is a reason why farmers wait until their crop is completely dry to harvest and don't harvest after a rain storm, it shouldn't be any different for harvesting native seeds. Now let me step off of my soapbox and talk about pests.

The particular pest that comes to mind are acorn weevils. When collecting acorns we will find 50% or more loss due to the acorn weevil. Damage is relatively easy to spot as damaged acorns have a small pinhole where the weevil burrowed in to take advantage of the proteins inside. You may be surprised squirrels didn't make the list as a pest. That's because squirrels are likely the best advocates for oak regeneration. Oftentimes, squirrels store seeds for the winter and never return. If just a few seeds are lucky enough to germinate that is enough to help ensure more oak trees are there for future generations.



White oak acorn seeds.

However, beating the squirrels and weevils is a time sensitive activity. Acorn drop is usually a very short time span, oftentimes accelerated by drought or fall windstorms. It is pertinent that if one is harvesting seeds to grow or direct seed, you need to be observant. Just this past week, I began collecting white and scarlet oak seeds for a habitat restoration project. Other seeds easy collected are goldenrod, New England aster, Joe Pye weed, sawtooth sunflower, and black walnut for a start.

If you are collecting seeds make sure you are in an area that allows it. Many parks and nature preserves prohibit removal of items from their lands. In general, it is always best to ask for permission regardless if it is public or private property. The internet is a great source of information when it comes to different cold stratification techniques. If you are interested in collecting milkweed, check out the Butler SWCD website for specific instructions on how to collect and where you can drop them off.

Soil Testing

**JT Benitez, OSU Extension
Butler County**



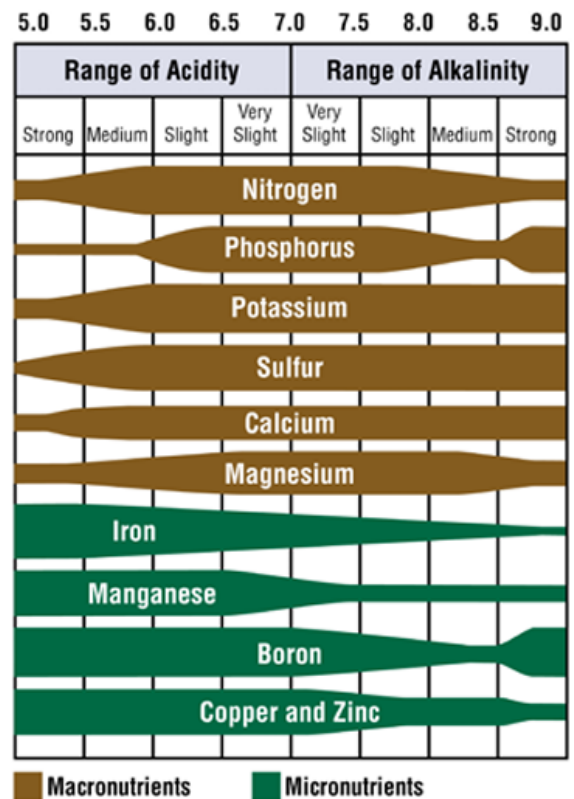
Have you ever wondered why your flower garden, vegetable garden, lawn, trees, or even your pasture or crop field are just not doing that great. What is the issue? What can I do to fix it? You strike up a conversation with a friend or acquaintance and they say “Just put some lime on it,” or “Just put a ton of 12-12-12 on it.” How many of you have gone forward with this concept and found that it didn’t help, or even made it worse? If this is you, I am sorry to hear because you may have wasted time and money and may need to spend even more money to fix what may have been done.

Conducting a soil test to begin with and investing \$10-\$12 into a scientifically university based soil laboratory test would have saved you a lot of money and headache to begin with! The soil test results will give you a full profile of your soil from pH, nutrient levels, organic matter, and more. Not only does it tell you all that, but the soil laboratory will give you recommendations on how to correct the issues.

Think about this, you may have added 12-12-12 Fertilizer for no reason, spending way more than the \$10-\$12 a soil test would cost. You also have added an unnecessary amount of fertilizer, which could potentially leach and runoff in rainwater and into waterways, instead of the plants utilizing it. If Phosphorus and Potassium levels are more than adequate, why would you add more? Did you know that many of the soil nutrients can remain in the soil, available to plants for anywhere from a couple months to even years? Fertilizer is only needed when you have a deficiency, not just because someone told you this is how to fix your issues. Soil testing is going to give you the answers to what needs to be done.

So, what about lime they told me to add? Well, lime raises soil pH and over time, continuously adding lime will continue to raise the pH to a point the plants won’t do well. Most garden veggie plants like a soil pH between 6-7. How well will those veggie plants do with a pH of 8.1? Most likely not well at all, or it can depend on the plants and how much they are willing to put up with. I always say to my clients, soil pH is the main thing to make sure is right before adding any nutrients, because no matter how much you add, if soil pH is wrong, the plants you are wanting to grow may not absorb enough needed nutrients.

Look at the chart provided, nutrient absorption is better in the 6-7 range for most nutrients, which is the best range to be in for most plants. So, now what do you do since you added lime and you are at 8.1 pH? Well, you are going to have to add Sulfur to bring it back to where it needs to be, more money of course. Your soil test will guide you on how much you would need to add to get you back in that 6-7 pH range.



Graphic adapted from the Corn & Soybean Field Guide (Purdue Extension publication ID-179).

How to Test My Soil?

OSU Extension Butler County

Butler SWCD works with Ohio State Extension office of Butler County for soils testing. Here are the steps to get your soil tested:

1. Connect with OSU Extension by calling (513)887-3722 or visit www.butler.osu.edu.
2. Visit the Butler OSU Office, 1802 Princeton Rd., Suite 400, Hamilton, 45011, to pick up a soil test packet. The cost varies depending upon the testing you request.
3. Follow instructions provided to collect sample and make sure the baggie is 3/4 full.
4. Send sample off to be analyzed. The shipping address is in the soil test packet.
5. Soil test results should be received in about two weeks. The analysis takes 3 to 5 working days from the time the lab receives the samples.
6. When you receive the results you can select the appropriate fertilizer nutrient ratio for your lawn or garden. The ratio is always displayed on the fertilizer bag.

New Employee Spotlight

Butler SWCD welcomes Dakotah Zimmer in their position as Natural Resource Technician.

Dakotah Zimmer grew up in Ashland, Kentucky where they fell in love with the rolling hills of Appalachia. Dakotah found interest in Environmental Sciences through Girl Scouts and their High School environmental science teacher. They went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science with a focus in plant ecology from Northern Kentucky University. After graduating, Dakotah has had the opportunity to work in and explore four counties within the Greater Cincinnati Region. Their work thus far has consisted of stream restoration, land management, and trail maintenance.

Dakotah's interests lie in prairie restoration, woodland management, and native plants. Hiking, playing in creeks, and identifying native plants are just some of Dakotah's hobbies outside of work. Dakotah is excited to continue work in the Natural Resources and to engage with the residents of Butler County to address natural resource concerns.



Dakotah enjoying the great outdoors.

Leave the Leaves this Fall!

Leaving some of the leaves on your lawn this fall can provide many benefits! You can use a mower to chop some of the leaves up and allow them to decompose to put nutrients back into your lawn. You can also use the leaves as mulch or compost them. Check to see if your local township or city has leaf collection services. Whatever you decide to do with your leaves, please keep them out of storm drains!

Dumping leaves down storm drains can pollute local waterways and harm aquatic communities.



2023 Election Results

Butler SWCD would like to sincerely thank our three candidates for running in this year's board of supervisors election: Harold E. Baxter Jr., Jeremy Fruth, and Nathan Krause.

Congratulations to Jeremy Fruth on his re-election and to Nathan Krause on being elected to serve on the SWCD board, beginning January 1, 2024.

And a huge thank you to everyone who voted!

If you're interested in running for the SWCD board next year and have questions in regards to eligibility or the process please reach out to our office by emailing butlerswcd@butlercountyohio.org.

Honoring Past Board Member: David R. Brate

David R. Brate first served on the Butler SWCD board from 1978 until 1990, and then ran again and got elected in 2018 and served until his passing this February. Dave loved agriculture and saw himself as a steward of the land. The years that Dave served on the board it was evident that he cared about conservation and that he cared about the District. He challenged not only the staff, but the board members to think outside the box and think of the future possibilities of conservation. He left an impact on Butler SWCD and for that we are grateful.



Pictured at annual meeting (left to right): Gary Gerber, Jeremy Fruth, Harold E. Baxter Jr., Michelle Hoffman, Connie Brate, Linda Peters, and Nathan Gillespie.

2023 Award Winners

Outstanding Cooperator - Bob & Candace Cook

Friend of Conservation - von Gostomski Family

Outstanding Conservationist - Agnes Marchlewska

Conservation Educator - Jeff Korb

Gail Lierer Crop Ins. Agency
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 Crop Insurance Agent
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 513-615-9257 cell
 lierer.1@gmail.com



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BEST Volunteer Event: Invasive Species Removal
Date: November 4, 2023
Time: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Location: Middletown
 Event Information & Sign-up at:
 www.butlerswcd.org/volunteer

D. Mike Schenck
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 Middletown, OH 45042-0233




Schenck Accounting LLC
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Butler SWCD

Mission: To promote the conservation, restoration, and responsible use of our natural resources through technical assistance and education.

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Milkweed Pod Collection
Now until November 12
 Drop-off Monday - Friday, 8am - 4:30pm
 1802 Princeton Rd, Hamilton 45011
 Green plastic bin in hallway

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Butler County Agriculture Society
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 www.butlercountyohfair.org



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The Butler SWCD and the NRCS prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status.
USDA: An Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer, and Lender.

Upcoming Events

- **BEST Volunteer, Habitat Restoration:** November 4
- **Board Meeting:** November 9
- **Office Closed, Veteran's Day:** November 10
- **Garden Series:** November 15
- **BEST Volunteer, Habitat Restoration:** November 18
- **Office Closed, Thanksgiving:** November 23 & 24
- **BEST Volunteer, Wildlife Holiday Decorations:** December 7
- **Board Meeting:** December 14
- **Office Closed, Christmas:** December 25
- **Office Closed, New Years:** January 1
- **Office Closed, MLK Jr. Day:** January 15

To find out more information on any upcoming events, please visit www.butlerswcd.org or call our office at (513) 887-3720.

Save the dates

