

Who's My Neighbor?

Kelly Crout, District Director

Time and time again, as our staff go out on drainage, erosion, or general natural resource calls, we often find ourselves in the middle of a “battle of the neighbors.” Where all parties are looking to figure out who is at fault, who is to blame, and who needs to pay for it. The simple answer is it might be everyone, someone, or no one. Mother Nature is complex, our world is constantly changing and that goes for our soil and water too. The creek in your backyard is not going to stay in the same path, the soil in your backyard (if not covered) is not going to stay in place. It’s called weathering and erosion and it’s a natural process that happens everywhere.

Sometimes the “problem” is a result of a neighbor that may have installed a pool, added tile, put in a culvert, or made some slight adjustments to their property. Sometimes it’s just the location of your property in relation to others, mixed with gravity, weather, and time.

But in the end, it doesn’t matter who caused it or who is to blame. The real issue is getting along with your neighbor. “Love Thy Neighbor” is a radical thought, especially in current times. But heck—let’s take the first step and actually talk to our neighbors! And no, talking isn’t yelling or complaining. Actually take the time to get to know them. Most of our “problems” are a result of not taking the time to talk and actually getting to know someone. Perhaps the real “problem” might be solved if neighbors worked and collaborated together, instead of jumping the gun and immediately suing each other or playing the blame game.

While we can go out and try to assist in finding solutions to your natural resource concerns, we are not there to settle disputes, take sides, or police anyone.

A past board member once remarked that the invention of air conditioning had more people staying inside, resulting in less time outside and talking to neighbors. You can even add the invention of garage doors—you just pull in and don’t even have to acknowledge anyone. We live next to people our whole lives, but hardly know their names, much less anything else about them.

No, you don’t have to agree with your neighbor, nor like them or have the same views. But, we are all here on this one planet with finite resources. Find common ground so that way you can preserve and protect it. So, the next time we are called out to a property, we can actually talk about solutions with all parties.



Butler SWCD Water Resource Specialist, Ashlee Mulrooney, working with residents on natural resource concerns. Photo credit: Butler SWCD.

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Everything is Connected

Ashlee Mulrooney, Water Resource Specialist

Do you ever wonder where the water goes when you wash your hands? Or where our drinking water comes from? Or question what happens to all of the water that falls when it rains? Well, here is a hint—everything is connected. You have probably heard a lot about the water cycle and how water is naturally replenished through evaporation, condensation, and precipitation. And technically, water is a renewable resource—in a sense. It is important to take into consideration the human involvement in the water cycle, and that even though water is plentiful in southwest Ohio, that doesn't always mean it is readily available or even usable.

Let's get down to the basics: the water cycle teaches us how water is naturally replenished on Earth. Sunlight causes evaporation which turns liquid into gas, the gas cools and turns into liquid or ice through condensation, then the water falls from the atmosphere in a form of precipitation. Precipitation will soak into pervious ground like grassy or forested areas, helping replenish waterways and groundwater. On impervious surfaces where water can't soak into the ground, like concrete or pavement, it will usually flow off those hard surfaces as stormwater runoff. Most subdivisions and communities have storm drains, storm sewer systems, and retention/detention basins to collect the water and slowly release it into neighboring waterways. Water that flows through local waterways can also help replenish groundwater, and vice versa.

In Butler County, most of our drinking water comes from the Great Miami Buried Valley Aquifer. This water is pumped from wells to water treatment plants, where the water is treated and then sent to communities via a system of underground pipes, pumps, and storage tanks, if you have public water. Once the water is used by the community (cooking, hygiene, washing, etc.), it is now labeled as wastewater and conveyed to a wastewater treatment plant via a sanitary sewer system. This water is then treated and discharged into a local waterway.

As you can see, everything is connected when it comes to water usage throughout a community. In one way or another, water will make its way back into local waterways, groundwater, and then the water cycle. However, it is not always as simple as it seems. Only about 2.5% of the water on Earth is available as freshwater, and much less of it is readily available for human use. Lots of people worry about the quantity, but what about the quality? Water pollution and contamination are large concerns that many environmental scientists have. For one, stormwater runoff is not treated when it enters local streams and rivers. Stormwater retention and detention ponds do help settle out some of the sediment and other suspended pollutants in water, but what about dissolved pollutants?

Also, many detention/retention basins need retrofits or are not properly maintained, which can lead to pollution in local waterways. Sediment, trash, debris, household chemicals, pesticides, oils, and fertilizers are common stormwater pollutants that enter local waterways, which can then seep into groundwater.

Many different types of pollutants are also sent into the wastewater treatment plant. Most wastewater treatment plants can treat wastewater sufficiently, getting rid of most contaminants, trash, debris, and organic solids before discharging to waterways. But there have been many hot button contaminants that are difficult to treat in wastewater, including PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as forever chemicals), microplastics, and pharmaceuticals. The concern of these contaminants in drinking water has also been discussed, with some grant funding in Ohio recently announced to help drinking water plants treat and test for PFAS. Salt use from application during the winter has also been identified as a potential contaminant in our local waterways and drinking water. While all of this may sound concerning, many agencies throughout Ohio are aware of the concerns and are implementing programs to help treat and prevent these contaminants in drinking water and wastewater.

In one way or another, the water that we all use, whether you are a farmer, an industrial warehouse, a business in the middle of the city, or just an individual household, will eventually make its way back into our natural environment. It is important to protect what we have while we can. We can all take action to protect our water resources—from small day to day activities, like picking up trash, reducing pesticide usage, properly disposing of household chemicals, to bigger picture activities like working with local communities and businesses on implementing green infrastructure projects and volunteering in local waterway cleanups. Here at Butler SWCD, we encourage our residents and corporations to take action and get involved where they can to help protect surface and groundwater. To learn more about how you can make a difference, visit our website at www.butlerswcd.org.



Volunteers cleaning up trash along the Great Miami River. Photo credit: Clean Sweep google drive.

Garlic Mustard: If you can't beat it, eat it!

Lynn White, Education & Volunteer Specialist

Garlic mustard has popped its head up and is an easy to find invasive plant in our woodlands, forest edges, stream banks, and disturbed areas. The second-year plant can be recognized by a tall stem featuring small white flowers.

It was first described in the U.S. on Long Island, New York in 1868. Since then, populations of garlic mustard have been reported in 30 states, mostly in the Northeast and Midwest. It has no significant natural enemies in North America, although a diverse community of herbivores feed on it in its native range in Europe.



Garlic mustard plant at Ruder Preserve in Oxford, OH. Photo credit: Butler SWCD.

Classed as a non-native invasive plant, this species is extremely tolerant of shaded conditions and is capable of establishing extensive, dense colonies in woodlands. In such situations, it out-competes and displaces native plants (wildflowers, trees, and shrubs) and the wildlife that depends on them. Many of our native spring wildflowers that grow in similar moist soil forest habitats are most impacted.

How does it spread?

In addition to being ignored by our herbivores, garlic mustard is a prolific seeder. Most seeds germinate within the first or second year after being produced but can remain viable in the soil bank for up to 10 years. During its first year, garlic mustard leaves are rounder and take on a rosette formation at ground level. In their second year it bolts into a mature 1-4 foot flowering stem, produces seeds and then dies. Young leaves smell distinctly of garlic or onion when crushed, although the odor becomes less intense as plants grow older.

Removal

Persistent hand-pulling may be practical on small patches. It is important to pull plants prior to flowering to prevent seed production. Flowering plants can continue to produce seeds for a few days following removal from soil. Plants that are already flowering when pulled will need to be bagged.

For larger areas, chemical applications have been shown to be successful when applied in the early spring prior to flowering and in the late fall on overwintering rosettes. Late fall applications can be applied on green overwintering rosettes after other forest understory plants are dormant, thus reducing non-target risks. Early spring

applications should consist of spot-spraying specific plants to avoid non-target impacts. Although garlic mustard is an invasive plant, you can actually cook with it.

Cooking tips for Garlic Mustard

- Use garlic mustard in any recipe calling for mustard greens.
- Young plants have a mild mustard flavor with hints of garlic and can be used raw.
- Older, larger leaves and plants have a more bitter, stronger flavor.
- The round leaves are less bitter than the triangular ones on the flower stalk.
- If the plant is in full flower or has produced seeds, it will be much more bitter.
- DO NOT USE plants that may have been treated with chemicals.
- Pull up the entire plant gently. The roots will keep it fresh until you are ready to use it. Then cut off the leaves, discard the flower stalk, wash, and use.
- DO NOT PLANT IT!! That is like planting dandelions, absolutely unnecessary.

Have fun being creative and experimenting with this weed, all while helping to control it.

There are many interesting recipes out there. A wonderful book with great recipes is: *From Pest to Pesto: a culinary guide from Wood County Land and Water Conservation in Wisconsin*. You can also find an endless amount of recipes just by googling.

Garlic Mustard Pesto

Ingredients:

- 4 cups chopped garlic mustard leaves
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup pine nuts
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Directions:

Wash and dry your garlic mustard leaves and give them a rough chop. Add the garlic mustard, parmesan cheese, pine nuts, and the olive oil to your food processor. Pulse until the texture is smooth but still grainy.

Add your lemon, then pulse again until the pesto is smooth.

Enjoy in any way you like pesto: added to a sandwich or pasta!

For more unique recipes like this one visit www.backyardforager.com.

The Smell of Money

Kelly Crout, District Director

Many who grew up in the livestock or farming industry may have heard the term “smells like money,” when referring to the smell of livestock manure. However, I can guarantee that not everyone agrees that manure smells like money. In fact, most would say they not only dislike the smell, but also the sight of manure. The reality is that all livestock produces manure. Manure from certain livestock animals can be great fertilizer, such as poultry litter. The best practice is to first soil test and nutrient test the manure to determine what amount and type of fertilizer you need before applying.

The real concern is when too much manure is applied to fields or stockpiled and then it rains, resulting in manure running off into a nearby stream or pond. When that happens, manure can contain Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium, Micronutrients, and E. coli, all of which then enter the stream or pond. Often this can result in a discoloration of water, or in worst case scenarios—a fish kill.

To help safeguard against potential runoff and pollution issues, there are guidelines and regulations from the USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); Nutrient Management Conservation Practice Standard Code 590. These “setbacks” set regulation on distances for spreading and storing manure as well as the best times to spread manure. The best time to spread manure is in the fall—when we have less rain events and less risk of manure running off and polluting local streams or ponds. As a livestock operator, it is your responsibility to understand the NRCS 590 setbacks for manure spreading and storage.

Type of Sensitive - Setback Area	Manure Surface Application	Manure Incorporation or Direct Injection
Residences / Private Wells down slope from the application area	100 ft	100 ft
Sinkholes	300 ft	100 ft
Pond or Lake	100 ft. at a minimum 35 ft of the 100 must be Vegetative Barrier ² Or 300 ft	35ft. Vegetative Barrier
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streams¹ • Ditches¹ • Surface Inlets 	35 ft Vegetative Barrier Or 35 ft with 50% residue cover at time of application Or 100 ft	None
Grassed Waterway	35 ft	None
Field Surface Drains	35 ft	None
Public Wells	300 ft	100 ft
Developed Springs down slope from the application area.	300 ft	300 ft
Public Surface Drinking Water Intake	300 ft	300 ft

Table: Minimum setback distances and Vegetative Treatment Requirements for the application of manure.

Besides following the NRCS 590 standard for manure storage, handling, and spreading, there are best management practices that can help limit manure from entering streams or ponds. These consist of having a grazing management plan for your livestock to help

prevent overgrazing, proper exclusion fencing to limit livestock in streams, and proper placement of manure stockpiles and heavy use pads based off of topography. To learn more about grazing management keep an eye out on our website and social media pages for our upcoming Grazing Workshop, to be held in July.

Being a good steward of the land and your livestock is essential as a farmer, and it helps to safeguard against nuisance calls from your neighbors.

On the flip side—if you moved to the “country,” just be aware that there are farms and they may now be your neighbors. And those farms may have livestock, which produce manure. That means from time to time you may see it or even smell it. Just because you do not like it, does not mean that that farmer is doing anything wrong with their operation. And that just because you wanted to build your house there, does not mean that everyone else around you has to change because you are uncomfortable and do not like that you have a livestock farm next to you.



Loading up a manure spreader. Photo credit: Butler SWCD.

Pasture Management For Healthy Land & Healthy Horses

Date:

Saturday, May 30

Time:

8:30 AM—1:00 PM

Location:

Greenacres Equine Arena

8400 Blome Road, Cincinnati, OH 45243

Cost:

\$25

Beginner-level workshop on Equine Grazing for equestrians with any number of horses. Learn from experienced practitioners through a combination of classroom instruction and an interactive pasture walk. Program topics include: grazing practices, pasture management, proactive manure management options, stocking rates and sacrifice lots, and a nutritional deep dive on equine forage with support from BCS 5.0 Equine Nutrition.

For details and tickets visit the Greenacres event webpage: www.green-acres.org.

Kids Summer Activities

Butler SWCD has a wide variety of FREE, fun kids programs this summer. Visit www.butlerswcd.org/kids for more.



Creeking in the Parks

Learn about the animals and fossils found in the creeks around the county. All ages are welcome! Appropriate footwear is required, no flip flops please. All June dates are in partnership with MetroParks of Butler County.

When: Every Thursday, June 4 through July 30
10 am - 12 pm

Where:

- **June 4** - Sebald MetroPark, 5580 Elk Creek Road, Middletown 45042
- **June 11** - Governor Bebb MetroPark, 1979 Bebb Park Lane, Okeana 45053
- **June 18** - Indian Creek MetroPark, 1899 Oxford-Reily Road, Oxford 45056
- **June 25** - Antenen Nature Preserve MetroPark, 2385 Treiber Road, Hamilton 45011
- **July 2** - No program
- **July 9** - Dudley Woods Park, 5591 Hankins Road, Liberty Township 45011
- **July 16** - Keehner Park, 7411 Barret Road, West Chester 45069
- **July 23** - Helen S. Ruder Preserve, Shadowy Hill Drive, Oxford 45056
- **July 30** - Turnbridge Park, 5889 Laurel Run Drive, Liberty Township 45011



Creeking in Parks photo(s) from 2026 events. Photo Credit: Butler SWCD.

2026 Poster Contest

Grades K-12

“Soil. Where it all Begins”

Each year, Butler SWCD works with local artists to create posters focusing on a specific conservation message. This year’s theme is “Soil. Where it all Begins.” This theme celebrates the incredible power of soil to support life in all its forms. Soil is not just the ground we walk on. It is the starting point for healthy food, clean water, thriving habitats, and resilient communities. From backyard gardens to forests and city parks, everything begins with what is beneath our feet.



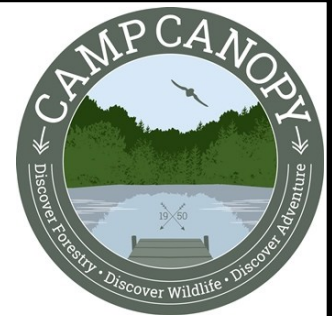
Soil does a lot more than grow plants. It holds water, cycles nutrients, and provides homes for billions of living organisms that help keep nature in balance. It keeps roots in place, helps prevent flooding, and supports wildlife and people alike. The trees in our neighborhoods, the food on our tables, and the natural places we love all depend on healthy soils.

Butler SWCD invites all Butler County K-12 students to participate in our annual poster contest. **Entry Deadline:** Monday, June 1.

Please visit www.butlerswcd.org/poster for all contest rules, judging guidelines, and available resources.

Camp Canopy

Camp Canopy is a wonderful opportunity for students interested in forestry and wildlife. The camp combines educational sessions with instructors from Ohio’s top natural resource organizations as well as industry experts from some of the state’s best educational institutions with adventures in the great outdoors. Plus, the traditional summer camp activities.



The camp will take place June 7 - June 12 in Carrollton, Ohio. For more information and how to register, check out www.campcanopy.com. Online registration is available until May 29.

The camp provides a unique opportunity for high school students to study up close and learn first-hand how to appreciate Ohio’s forest and related natural resources. Butler SWCD offers a Camp Canopy Scholarship to one Butler County student who has completed the 8th grade and is at least 15-years of age.

Visit www.butlerswcd.org/grants to learn how to apply for this great opportunity.



2026 Wildlife Garden Series

This free series is brought to you by Hamilton Conservation Corps, OSU Extension of Butler County, and Butler Soil & Water Conservation District. All sessions will begin at 6:00 PM, we hope you can join us.

Session #2

Date: **May 13**

Location: Cherokee Park, 4616 Watoga Drive, Liberty Township 45011

Topics: How to make gardening easier & take a tree and wildlife walk.

Session #3

Date: **September 9**

Location: West Chester Historical Society, 6670 Station Road, West Chester Township 45069

Topics: Take a bug and plant walk in the native garden.

Session #4

Date: **November 18**

Location: Butler SWCD/OSU Extension, 1802 Princeton Road, Hamilton 45011

Topics: Watch out for the invasive insects of southwest Ohio.

Registration: Free, however, we ask that you register to assist us with providing resources. Visit www.butlerswcd.org or call (513) 887-3720 to register.

Save-the-Date: Grazing Workshop

Date:

Wednesday, July 15

Time & Location:

TBD

Registration:

Keep an eye out on our social media pages and the District website for the official times, locations, and registration links.



Welcome Back!

Maddy Miner, Natural Resource Technician



Hello! My name is Maddy Miner, I grew up in the Clermont County area, spending a large part of my childhood along the Little Miami River. This led me to have a strong passion for protecting our environment, so much so that I ended up attending Miami University, where I earned my bachelor's

degree in biology with a focus in environmental science and horticulture.

I previously worked with the Butler SWCD team as an intern and have an additional background in invasive pest management and research into nutrient cycling in forested ecosystems. My interests lie in soil, stream, and forest ecology and natural resource conservation. In my free time I love to hike, hammock, identify trees, go out to my local creeks, do aerial silks, and workout. I'm excited to continue working for Butler SWCD and assisting Butler County residents with their natural resource concerns.

Butler SWCD Election

Interested in conservation? Wanting to assist in the protection of Butler County's natural resources? Then maybe a spot on our five-member SWCD Supervisors Board would be of interest.

The five-member Board of Supervisors is responsible for developing and administering the conservation assistance programs offered and conducted in Butler County through the Butler Soil & Water Conservation District. They are publicly elected officials, serving without pay, responsible to the people of the district and state. Each term is a length of three-years.

Ohioans entrust soil and water conservation district Supervisors with some of the state's most precious assets, our natural resources. A Supervisor's primary responsibility is to ensure that the community uses its natural resources wisely, with an eye toward the future. To be an effective board member, Supervisors must play an important role in how the community deals with a wide variety of resource management issues, including water quality, drainage, and soil erosion.

If you are interested in running in our next Board of Supervisor's elections this year or would like more information in regard to the position, please reach out to our office by emailing butlerswcd@bcOhio.gov.

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**Save-the-date:
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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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USDA: An Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer, and Lender.

Upcoming Events

- **BEST Volunteer, Rain Garden Cleanup:** May 6
- **Board Meeting:** May 12
- **Wildlife Garden Series, Session #2:** May 13
- **Rain Barrel Workshop:** May 14
- **PUPs in the Park:** May 19
- **Office Closed, Memorial Day:** May 25
- **Creeking in the Park:** June 4
- **Board Meeting:** June 9
- **Creeking in the Park:** June 11
- **Creeking in the Park:** June 18
- **Office Closed, Juneteenth:** June 19
- **Conservation Kids Camp:** June 22—24
- **Creeking in the Park:** June 25
- **Office Closed, Independence Day:** July 3
- **Conservation Kids Camp:** July 6—8
- **Creeking in the Park:** July 9
- **Board Meeting:** July 14

- **Grazing Workshop:** July 15
- **Creeking in the Park:** July 16
- **Creeking in the Park:** July 23
- **Butler County Fair, SWCD Farm Zone Day:** July 29
- **Creeking in the Park:** July 30
- **Butler SWCD Election:** July 30—August 28

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

