

Conservation Connection

Winter 2024

Doing More with More

Kelly Crout, District Director

It seems like in the last 10 or so years, specifically after 2008, the mantra of many has been "doing more with less." While I do agree that sometimes all of us find ourselves over spending and wanting more, there are certain times when that is impossible. And honestly, in those past years, Butler SWCD, along with other agencies, organizations, and businesses, did more with less. Our numbers still continued to increase or hold the same. But in reality, did our quality increase? Did our staff reach burnout faster? Do we now have the mindset that it is "bad" to spend money on something necessary?

So while I agree that you should become more efficient and fiscally responsible, that doesn't mean that you should do without, or that growing and trying new things is bad. Growth is a natural process for any business - if you don't you won't advance.

That's why Butler SWCD has tried to SHIFT our mindset and thinking the past few years. Why struggle and have to try to do multiple tasks, when we can find someone who is skilled to assist in our work? Now, we can still work smarter, not harder, and get the results we want.

We had two interns last year with specific focuses to help with workload. We recently hired a part-time Natural Resource Tech to assist with field and technical work. And Butler SWCD is now a part of the AmeriCorps - Ohio River Basin ORBCorps program. This ORBCorps member will be working on GIS and Data Analysis for our mapping, stream data, workshops, etc. They will be stationed in our office for a year, and hopefully we will be able to have someone in that position for the three years that the initial program allows. While the ORBCorps position is still vacant, we have high hopes to fill it. If you know of anyone that would be a perfect fit, have them reach out to our office.

So, although we can't predict the future, Butler SWCD will be doing more with more. More technology, more experiences, more training, and more team members. Because sometimes less is not the answer.

Here's to you doing more with more in 2024!

Passing of Past Board Member John David Francis (1928 - 2024)

John David Francis, age 95, of Morgan Township, passed away on January 6. John grew up on his family farm, which he returned to after teaching vocational agriculture. John also owned and operated Francis Equipment Company, which specialized in Case and later Oliver equipment. He then later managed the First National Bank branch in Ross. In 2003 he established Alpaca Corner, where he raised registered Huacaya alpacas. He was very active in his community and served as a Butler Soil & Water Conservation District board member from 1971-1976. His Alpaca Corner was also a farm visit stop on the Farm City Tour. Inside this issue:

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2024 Tree & Shrub Sale

As discussed in the Bonus Edition of the Conservation Connection Newsletter sent out in December, the Butler SWCD Tree & Shrub Sale will look a little different this year. We will be using a Google Form to take tree reservations. No form of payment will be taken for your tree reservation until you pick-up your order during the designated dates and times in April.

Don't worry if you miss the February Google Form Reservation dates, once the tree reservation orders have all been picked up, all leftover trees will be sold in-person.

How to Order:

From February 1 until February 29 a Google Form will be posted on our website at www.butlerswcd.org/treesale. Much like any online order you will choose the trees you want and the quantity. However, you will not pay for your order until the pick-up dates. Tree and Shrub species will again be sold in packs of 5 bare root seedlings, with prices ranging from \$10 to \$15 a pack.

Large Orders:

If you are looking to place an order of 100 trees or more for a park, school, or for yourself, you MUST contact the office before February 29, so we can ensure large quantities will be available from the nursery.

Pick-up Dates For Tree Reservation Orders:

Tuesday, April 9	2:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Wednesday, April 10	9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
In-Person Tree Sale Dates:	
Wednesday, April 10	2:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Thursday, April 11	9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Pick-up Location:

Farm Zone Building - Butler County Fairgrounds 1715 Fairgrove Avenue, Hamilton, OH 45011

Forms of Payment:

All reserved trees and in-person tree sales must be paid for with cash or check only. No credit card payments will be accepted.

Sales Tax:

We are required by the state of Ohio to collect sales tax on all orders. If you are tax exempt you may reserve your trees on the Google Form, but please call the office at (513)887-3720 to let us know. You will be required to provide an exemption form, found on our website, prior to the pick-up date.

Other Important Information:

We can neither alter the contents of packs upon request, nor deliver them to your home. The plants are nursery inspected to be disease free. Butler SWCD is not responsible for their survival after they have been picked up by the customer. If a species is not able to be supplied by the nursery due to disease, reservations can be replaced with another species or removed from the order total.

Butler Co. Fertilizer & Pesticide Recertification

Date:

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

Location:

OSU Extension - Butler County 1802 Princeton Rd. Hamilton. OH 45011

Times:

FACT 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM PAT 1:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Cost:

Fertilizer Only \$15 Pesticide Only \$25 Fertilizer & Pesticide \$35

Contact / RSVP:

J.T. Benitez - benitez.6@osu.edu - (513)714-3891

FACT/PAT class fees are a separate cost from your renewal application fee to be paid to the ODA. The ODA will be mailing you your renewal application. Let the ODA or J.T. Benitez know if you did not receive your renewal mailing.

To receive a recertification, it is a two-part process:

- 1. Attend a FACT/PAT recertification training
- 2. Complete/Return ODA renewal application form.

2024 SWOWA Schedule

Are you a friend of the forest, have an interest in managing your woods, or just love trees? Consider joining SWOWA, the Southwest Ohio Woodland Association. A laid-



back group of people who get together quarterly, and sometime more often, to learn about different topics, go on forestry hikes, and much more. Did I mention we love trees?

April 21 - Bill Hammitt Tree Farm, Harrison, Ohio; Walnut Production and Christmas Trees

July 21 - Scott Unger Farm, Brookville, Ohio; Commercial Hazelnut Production, Reforestation, Barn Restoration

October 20 - Doug Gale, Middletown, Ohio; Woodland Restoration

Join our email list to learn about upcoming workshops by emailing Randy Evans at director@3vct.org.

Winter Interests

Dakotah Zimmer, Natural Resource Tech

After the holidays, the winter season can seem especially dark, cold, and dull. During the colder months of the year, people retreat indoors, bundling up, staying cozy, and resting until warm weather returns. Similarly, many deciduous plants become dormant in cold weather, dropping their leaves and storing energy to use in the spring.

Winter is a time of stillness and rest for people and plants alike. It may seem as though winter is completely barren and still; however, some of our native plants have interesting features that remain visible throughout the winter. Even during their dormancy, these plants provide habitat, food, and landscape interest. Within this article are just a few native plant species that have winter persisting features, such as fruits, leaves, and even flowers!



Eastern White Pine (Pinus strobus).

The blue-green, feathery needles of Eastern White Pine, *Pinus strobus*, trees stand out in a crowd of other leafless, dormant plants this time of the year. Growing up to 80feet tall, the white pine is easy to spot and identify, even as a novice naturalist. This evergreen supports a variety of wildlife during the winter; providing food and shelter for birds and mammals to retreat to. The Eastern White Pine is a great addition to a large, wooded backyard, and can be used as a privacy wind-break.

Another common evergreen tree, the Eastern Red Cedar, *Juniperus virginiana*, is a colorful and hardy winter tree that can grow up to 40-feet tall. Eastern Red Cedar trees present bright green, scaly needles, red-brown bark, and small blue cones during the winter season. This tree can grow in almost any condition, being one of the best drought tolerant evergreen species in our region. Eastern Red Cedar trees are even colorful on the inside, as a cross section of their wood reveals a white and red "bullseye." Although slightly harder to spot in our region, American Holly, *llex opaca*, is another native evergreen tree. Holly grows relatively slow and can reach up to 60-feet tall in its natural landscape. However, there are many Holly cultivars specifically bred to express different features such as smaller size, more berries, and uniform shape. American Holly has dark, leathery leaves, smooth bark, and bright red-orange drupes that persist on the tree from September to February.



American Holly (Ilex opaca).

Common Witch Hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*, is a deciduous shrub that can grow up to 20-feet tall. While most plants are bare and dormant during the winter, Witch Hazel produces yellow or orange, ribbon-like flowers for moth species to pollinate. A unique feature of Witch Hazel is their ability to produce flowers and fruit (seed pods) at the same time. Each seed pod only contains two seeds, but when ripe, the capsules burst open and disperse them up to 30-feet away from the shrub!



Common Witch Hazel (Hamamelis virginiana).

This winter, I encourage (those brave enough) to bundle up and enjoy a peaceful walk to see some of the great sights our native plants have to offer this time of year.

If you plan on staying bundled up indoors this winter season, it could be a great time to plan your spring garden to include native plants with winter interests to enjoy next

Coldwater Streams

Ashlee Widener, Water Resource Specialist

During the winter months, water temperatures drop compared to their temperatures in the summer months. But what about streams that are cold year round, and not just in the winter?

Coldwater streams are typically fed by groundwater or are high in elevation and remain cold all year, even during the summer. Coldwater streams typically hold a temperature of 20°C or below in summer months. They support an assemblage of organisms not typically found in warmwater streams. In the summer months, high temperatures prohibit coldwater species from inhabiting warmer streams. Coldwater streams also typically have more dissolved oxygen than warmwater streams, which can help support sensitive species. Healthy coldwater streams will most likely also have a forested or vegetated riparian area, sequences of riffles, pools, and runs, and may be steeper in gradient than other streams. They typically also have excellent water quality.

In Ohio, coldwater habitat is designated as either streams that support native coldwater species or inland trout streams that support trout stocking and are managed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The majority of streams you encounter in Ohio and in Butler County are warmwater habitat streams. However, the Mad River, Ohio's longest coldwater stream is relatively close by, where it flows into the Great Miami River in Montgomery County.



Stream in Fairfield Township during winter.

<u>Coldwater Habitat Fauna</u>

Coldwater streams have different assemblages of species and support communities that you typically wouldn't see in warmwater habitat streams. Some coldwater species can inhabit both warmwater and coldwater habitat streams but may be more common in coldwater streams. Coldwater species are better adapted to colder temperatures than they are to warmer temperatures and might not survive well in warmwater streams, particularly during the summer months. Some coldwater fish species include redside dace, mottled sculpin, native brook trout, and brook stickleback. Streams, as previously mentioned, can also be managed and stocked with trout, such as the non-native brook trout, and be classified as coldwater habitat.



Mottled Sculpin found in Butler County stream.

Coldwater adapted macroinvertebrates include taxa within the mayfly, stonefly, caddisfly, dragonfly, beetle, aquatic fly family, and more. To be identified as a coldwater taxon, most macroinvertebrates will have to be identified down to at least the genus level and sometimes the species level. This is a difficult task and is mostly tackled by Level 3 Qualified Data Collectors for macroinvertebrates in Ohio. You may also find coldwater adapted vertebrates, like salamanders, in coldwater habitat streams. These species are also adapted to perennial flow and are lungless, like the endangered cave salamander, long-tailed salamander, and northern and southern two-lined salamander.

Primary Headwater Habitat

Primary headwater (PHW) streams are streams that are characterized as having a watershed of less than 1 square mile and pool depths of below 40 cm (Ohio EPA) and may have varying flow patterns compared to larger streams. These characteristics make these streams habitable to biological communities not typical of larger streams.

Primary headwater streams can be broken down into three different classes; Class I, II, and III, all with different characteristics of flow patterns, temperature, and fauna. Class III PHW streams are influenced by groundwater and typically exhibit perennial flow, or flow year round. Class III PHW streams can also be classified further based on the aquatic organism community. Class III PHW exhibit diverse communities of coldwater macroinvertebrate taxa and reproducing populations of specific coldwater adapted salamanders. In contrast to Class I and II PHW streams, Class III streams support coldwater adapted organisms like fish, macroinvertebrates, and salamanders.

Keeping these streams vegetated and undisturbed helps protect coldwater and primary headwater habitat. Protecting these streams and headwater streams is extremely important for overall watershed health and to protect coldwater adapted species.

Sources: Ohio EPA Field Evaluation Manualm for Ohio's Primary Headwater Habitat Streams.

Winter Manure Application

Brady Smith, Rural Specialist

According to the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center, the Northern Hemisphere is under an El Nino advisory until April/June 2024. What does that mean? Simply put, we are likely to have above average temperatures and above average rainfall. A cold and snowy winter has its challenges just as much as a mild, wet winter.

Winter manure application is <u>never</u> recommended, but with the current weather pattern it is even riskier; even fall applied manure is at risk to being subject to runoff into nearby streams. As livestock managers, we need to be better at managing manure. At this time the area we are in is not subject to strict regulations like what is in the Western Lake Erie Basin, but that doesn't mean we couldn't be subject to this in the future.

Take what is happening in the Gulf of Mexico for instance; each summer the algal blooms cover nearly 9,000 square miles. The algal blooms, called the hypoxic zone, can be as large as the state of Massachusetts. Driven by increased nitrate runoff, the hypoxic dead zone cannot support sea life, ruins summer recreation, and has decimated local fisheries. The Hypoxia Task Force is putting increasing pressure on the states in the Mississippi River Watershed (including Ohio) to better manage nitrate pollution.

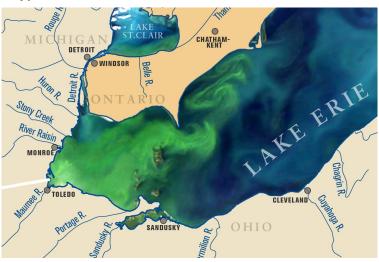
Nitrate pollution is a complicated problem. Human change in the landscape has removed forests, drained wetlands, and increased fertilizer use. Take a drive around the area; it is easy to pick out the bad actors. As the general public becomes increasingly aware of where their food comes from, how it was raised, and what good and bad agricultural practices are, they become more aware of what they see. And what is done on the field next to the road is in prime spotlight of any passing motorists.

As livestock managers, we can do a better job at this by following basic principles, many of which have been in place for the better of two decades.

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	
	100 ft. at a minimum 35 ft of the 100 must be Vegetative Barrier ²		
Pond or Lake	Or	35ft. Vegetative Barrier	
	300 ft		
 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	

Ohio NRCS 590 Standard.

Talking to farmers who share like-minded views, some of them often say "it's a disgrace" or "we have to do better." No amount of lobbying or misinformation can deny the facts. Numbers show we are losing dissolved nutrients at a staggering amount annually. As livestock managers we can do a better job at preventing this, by following basic practices, many of which have been in place for the better of two decades. We must follow these practices if nutrient loss from manure is to be reduced. Please note, it is recommended that producers <u>never</u> apply manure from November to March 1st, unless conditions are suitable to spread onto living crop (for example wheat, cover crop, hay).



This image by the Michigan Sea Grant shows the algal bloom in Lake Erie during 2011. Algal blooms on the lake have damaged fish populations and the recreation industry. Changes in the last 20 years have caused states within it's watershed to be more proactive about nutrient management. Your local SWCD has the tools to test runoff and assist with comprehensive nutrient management plans.



Above is surface application with little to no buffer. In this case we would recommend increasing the buffer in excess of what is called for in the NRCS 590 standard and avoid spreading in areas prone to surface runoff.

Let's all agree to do our part and be better livestock managers and manure applicators, because those 5 regulations could be coming faster than we think.

Considerations of Forest Management

Brady Smith, Rural Specialist

Butler County residents have identified invasive species as one of the areas of greatest need for assistance. It can be overwhelming to a resident when faced with a long neglected property, inundated with many acres filled with invasive species. Plants like honeysuckle, pear trees, wild grape vine, privet, and much more have dominated the landscape, replacing areas once filled by native trees, thickets, and much more. Previously diverse native forests have become monocultures of invasive species. Owners who feel responsible for maintaining the natural beauty of their property turn to forestry contractors to assist in clearing the brush. But without proper care they could be left with a hefty bill and little to no positive results in return. This article is meant to serve as a brief synopsis of different choices a caretaker might choose and why, along with possible drawbacks.

Cut Stump Treatment

Cut stump treatment is likely the most certain method of terminating invasive species. Individually cutting and then treating the stump with herbicide so that it doesn't come back. The difficulty could be how labor intensive it is, safely applying herbicide so that no off target application occurs, and simply forgetting what stumps are treated and not treated. One recommendation to ensure this is to make a plan, cut only a few at a time, work in a team, and use dye in the chemical mixture to show which has been treated.



Cut stumps from a BEST Volunteer event at Dudley Woods Metropark after herbicide application.

Foliar Spray

Foliar spray is likely the fasted method of treatment. Spraying just after the first frost with a high pressure sprayer is a technique often used by people who are trying to cover many acres of forest. Advantages include speed, better coverage, and ease of access achieved by longer hoses. Potential drawbacks could include the inability to access areas due to terrain, pesticide use, and off target applications.



Guests at Butler SWCD's Forestry Workshop learning about how Terry Lavy uses his foliar spray rig to treat invasive species.

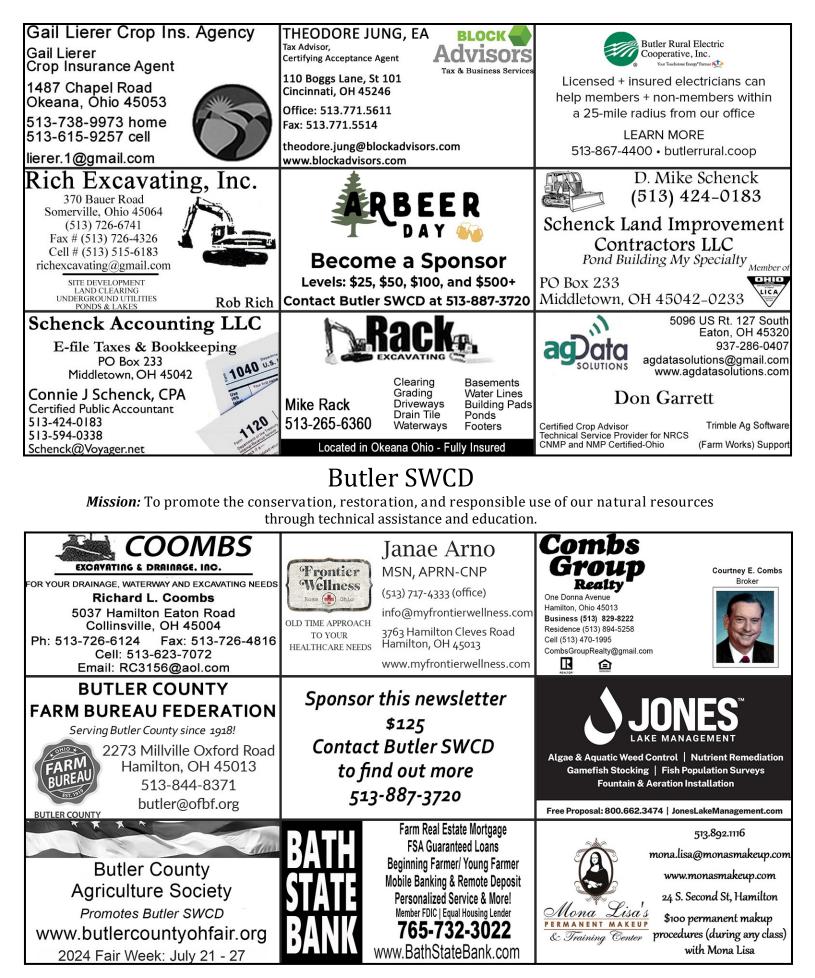
Forestry Mulching

Forestry mulching is often seen as the end all to honeysuckle, when in fact it could be the worst thing to bring onto your property. Forestry mulchers are excellent at covering vast amounts of acres fast. However, they are likely the most destructive option both to plants and wildlife. It is difficult to decipher from the cab of a skid steer what is native and invasive. Any and everything in the path of destruction is obliterated; small wildlife, young trees, native shrubs, and so much more. Lastly, forestry mulching doesn't kill root systems, oftentimes resulting in an even thicker stand of invasive species. Forests were never as clean as we would like them to be; native vines, shrubs, and thickets are what made our ecosystems so diverse. Forestry mulching is best used in abandoned pastures after carefully documenting what species need to be saved.



Damage done during forestry mulching. Image Source: Robert L. Anderson, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.

Please always think before you make a decision that could affect your forest for generations. Butler SWCD and your local state service forester are all here to help. You may even qualify for a free forest management plan and funding to help offset the cost of honeysuckle removal. Visit our website or call our office for more information.



Want to Sponsor our Newsletter? Contact our office today (513) 887-3720



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Upcoming

Events

- Tree & Shrub Sale Reservations: February 1-29
- Board Meeting: February 20
- BEST Volunteer, Bat Houses: February 29
- Board Meeting: March 12
- BEST Volunteer, Cleanup: March 16
- HOA Workshop: March 23
- Board Meeting: April 9
 Tree & Shrub Reservation Pick-Up: April 9 & 10
- **Tree & Shrub Sale:** April 10 & 11

- BEST Volunteer, Cleanup: April 20
- Garden Series: April 23
- ArBeer Day: April 26

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



Homeowners Association

Workshop

Date: Saturday, March 23

Time: 9 AM - 12 PM

Location: 1802 Princeton Road, Hamilton, OH 45011

Please save-the-date for Butler County's HOA

Workshop! Feel free to join us if you live in an HOA, manage an HOA, or are on an HOA board. Topics included are general drainage system and maintenance, streams and erosion, and more. Keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for registration to open shortly.

Coffee and donuts provided. Registration will be limited to 70 participants.



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