



Conservation Connection

Summer 2023

180 Days To Go

Kelly Crout, District Director

Maybe I sound like a broken record, but man, Butler SWCD has been really busy this year. We are now at the half-way point, and while the finish line is getting closer, we still have some great programs and events to keep us busy before we reach the end of 2023.

July obviously means fair time, and this year we will be bringing back the soils trailer all week. On Wednesday, July 26 we will have Butler SWCD day at the Farm Zone. At the end of July, Butler SWCD will be hosting the summer conference for all Ohio SWCD's in West Chester. We estimate about 300 conservation board and staff from all over Ohio will be in attendance.

As for our programs, we have our Board of Supervisors' election taking place and our 81st Annual Meeting which will be held on Tuesday, August 15 at Hanover Reserve. We have finished up two sessions of our LandownHER: Women in Ag Series and those will continue until October. We will be holding our Cover Crop Field Day on August 30 and a new event, Pollinator Fest on September 30. Fall classroom scheduling begins August 1, and of course we still have our BEST Volunteer events each month, notably, our River Cleanup on September 16. And although our calendar is getting full, I am sure that we will find a few empty days in which we will inevitably schedule some workshop, speaking event, or festival.

We hope that you also continue to have a busy, yet productive rest of the year and we look forward to seeing you at one or many of our upcoming events.



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Nathan Gillespie
Secretary

Harold E. Baxter Jr.
Member

Election Legal Notice

The Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission will cause an election of Supervisors of the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to be held in accordance with Chapter 940 of the Ohio Revised Code. Individuals who own or occupy land within the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District and are 18 years of age or older may vote for Supervisor.

There are 4 ways an eligible voter can cast a ballot:

- 1.) At the SWCD office, 1802 Princeton Rd., Suite 300, Hamilton, Ohio 45011 from July 29, 2023 until August 27, 2023 during normal business hours (Monday - Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM); **or**
- 2.) At the SWCD Annual Meeting, which will take place at Hanover Reserve, 1905 Millville Oxford Rd., Hamilton, Ohio 45013 on August 15, 2023 from 6:00 PM—8:00 PM; **or**
- 3.) At the Butler County Fair Livestock Auction, which will take place at 1715 Fairgrove Ave., Hamilton, Ohio 45011 on July 29, 2023 from 9:00 AM—12:00 PM; **or**
- 4.) Voting absentee from July 29, 2023 until August 27, 2023, by requesting the ballot application and election ballot from the SWCD office at the following address: 1802 Princeton Rd., Suite 300, Hamilton, Ohio 45011, by calling (513)887-3720, or email butlerswcd@butlercountyohio.org. All absentee ballots must be requested by August 23, 2023.

Absentee ballots must be received by the Butler SWCD office by August 28, 2023 at 12:00 PM.

Two Supervisors will be elected to a three-year term commencing January 1, 2024 and ending December 31, 2026.

Nominees are:

1. Harold E. Baxter Jr.
2. Jeremy Fruth
3. Nathan Krause

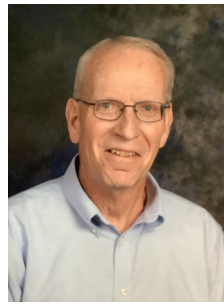


Board Responsibilities

The term of current Supervisors, Harold E. Baxter Jr. and Jeremy Fruth, will expire December 31, 2023.

The five member board of supervisors is responsible for developing and administering the conservation assistance programs offered through the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District conducted in Butler County. They are public officials, serving without pay, responsible to the people of the district and state.

Candidates:



Harold E. Baxter Jr., grew up on a dairy farm in Union (West Chester) Township and currently resides in Liberty Township. Harold is a widower with four grown children and ten grandchildren. He retired after serving as the Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV) Administrator with the Butler County Auditor's Office for 47 years.

Harold is also a long time Butler County Farm Bureau member, a life member of the Liberty Township Historical Society, and active in the Liberty Heights Church.

In May of 2023, Harold was appointed to fill a vacancy in the Butler SWCD Board of Supervisors. However, this is not the first time Harold has worked with Butler SWCD. Prior to his position with the Auditor's Office, Harold served as the Executive Secretary from 1971 to 1976.

In 2021 Harold received the Butler SWCD Friend of Conservation award for his continued assistance with the District. He has been a guest speaker at landowner workshops discussing changes to the county's CAUV program and also encouraged residents to contact the District when they had any questions regarding conservation.

Harold would like to continue serving Butler County by helping promote and assist the District with conservation issues.



Incumbent, **Jeremy Fruth**, a resident of Wayne Township, is seeking re-election as Supervisor of the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District. Jeremy is a production grain and cattle farmer, farming 1,200 acres consisting of corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay. He has been long affiliated with Miami University's biology, geology, and environmental

science departments, where he graduated and continues to work in research and lab development.

Jeremy has installed over 10,000 feet of CRP waterway projects through the SWCD on his property. He was awarded the Joe Dudley Outstanding Conservation, and has completed two Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans.

In the past Jeremy has helped lead our county's FFA soils judging competition. Jeremy would appreciate the opportunity to again serve as a supervisor on the board. Having worked for Soil and Water from 2007 - 2010, he understands the conservation issues that the agricultural and urban communities face in Butler County, and hopes to continue offering his guidance and assistance with these issues.



Nathan Krause, is a construction contractor and small farmer who lives in Oxford Township. He and his wife Stacie have four daughters and are life-long residents of Butler County. Nathan is constantly working to improve and maintain drainage management and soil health on his farms. He also owns a small

business that performs invasive brush and tree species removal with a focus on propagating and maintaining native plant and tree species.

Nathan is involved in projects and ministries at Queen of Peace parish in Millville, Ohio. He is a veteran of the United States Army. He is a current member of the Izaak Walton League of America. Nathan is also involved with multiple projects for the Butler County Fair. Nathan has always had a passion for all things agriculture, and is an active outdoorsman and conservationist.

Nathan has extensive experience and knowledge through construction and maintenance in the water production and wastewater treatment industry. He hopes to use his experiences and abilities to better serve our community.




**BUTLER SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Let's Celebrate Conservation

You're Invited

81st Annual Meeting

AT HANOVER RESERVE



**2 Hour Event,
Dinner
Included**

**Free &
Open to
the Public**

**Tuesday
August 15**

6:00 pm – 8:00pm
Hanover Reserve
1905 Millville Oxford Road
Hamilton, OH 45013

Evening Entertainment:
Jeff Davis
Presentation: Paddy's Run Conservation
Project Herpetological Survey

Awards Presentation
Butler SWCD Staff

Please RSVP To: butlerswcd@butlercountyohio.org

Resident Request for Absentee Ballot Butler

I, _____, hereby request an absentee voter ballot and envelope from Butler Soil and Water Conservation District. If requesting a ballot for other members who reside in the same household (spouse, partner, children, etc.) please print each name below.

I am an eligible voter of Butler SWCD, being 18 years of age or older and reside within the District:

Print Name(s)

Please Mail absentee voter ballot(s) and envelope(s) to the following address:

Resident Name (Please Print Clearly): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

The absentee ballot request form is provided for you above. Please fill out all of the information, cut out on dotted line, and mail to **Butler SWCD, 1802 Princeton Road, Suite 300, Hamilton, OH 45011**. Please note, all requested absentee ballots must be requested by **August 23, 2023**.

Importance of Stream Habitat

Ashlee Widener, Water Resource Specialist

One of the many goals in improving stream health is to protect, restore, and enhance important habitat. In order to do that, it's important to understand and recognize what types of habitat are important to biological communities and which play a functional role in a stream or river ecosystem. There's a variety of factors in play which determine stream health as well as what determines good and poor habitat.

Unhealthy streams can be affected by land-based activities that increase nutrients, pollutants, and sediments entering streams. Heavy urbanization, hydromodification, and agricultural activities can all negatively impact stream ecosystems and result in poor habitat. Oftentimes, they'll have low oxygen levels and high nutrients resulting in algal blooms, pollutant tolerant species like bloodworms, and a loss of sensitive species. Comparatively, a healthy stream will be present under well managed land-based activities that reduce the amount of nutrients, pollutants, and sediments entering streams. Healthy systems also support complex processes, like nutrient cycling and floodplain connection. Common indicators of healthy streams include sufficient oxygen, a rocky substrate stream bottom, and a variety of sensitive macroinvertebrates. Examples of sensitive macroinvertebrates present in a healthy stream include caddisfly, mayfly, and stonefly larvae.

Habitat surveys are an important part of determining stream health. There are several habitat types that are important for different biological communities. Just looking at habitat does not give the entire story of the health of the stream, but it does show that there are functional habitat sites that can support diverse fish and bug communities. These habitat types include but are not limited to: woody debris, vegetation, deep pools, oxygenated riffles, boulders, and rocky substrate.

A common area that many larger fish or sunfish may prefer is woody debris and root wad habitats. These provide refuge, cover, and feeding grounds and can help establish pools. Woody debris also helps provide bank stabilization and reduction of sediment entering the streams. Many small fish may prefer root mats and aquatic macrophyte habitat. Root mats provide food and cover and macrophytes (an aquatic plant) serve as a nursery habitat for some fish. Macroinvertebrates also like to congregate on the vegetation and root mats in the water. Boulders are a common habitat for smallmouth bass and stonecats which provide food and cover, however they are only functional if they have space underneath them for the fish. Lastly, rocky substrates make a good habitat for many fish, for example, darters or madtoms. Gravel, cobble, and boulder work well, however it is important that the substrate is silt free. Depths and velocities of stream and rivers also vary along



Root wad in Four Mile Creek

the channel, which we call the riffle, run, or pool areas. Riffles are the fast, shallow flow over boulders and cobbles which break the water surface. Runs are the smooth, unbroken flow which connects riffles and pools. If functional, these two areas tend to be biologically diverse and include the pollution-sensitive fish species that need clean, silt-free substrates, and high oxygen levels. Darters are often found in the riffle habitat as they provide feeding opportunities, where several different types of macroinvertebrates reside. Pools are areas of slow flowing, deep water, often on the outside of bends. This habitat is where large predators such as largemouth bass, flathead catfish, suckers, and minnows reside. These pools also provide refuge during dry periods and are more functional the deeper they get. The cleaner the substrate and the deeper the pools and runs, the better for fish and macroinvertebrate communities.

In Ohio, streams and rivers are designated an "aquatic life use (ALU)" based upon the potential of that stream or river to support certain biological communities. In Ohio, there are four aquatic life use designations: Exceptional Warmwater Habitat (EWH), Warmwater Habitat (WWH), Modified Warmwater Habitat (MWH), and Limited Resource Waters (LRW). High quality stream and river habitats will most likely fall under EWH. Most of Ohio's streams and rivers are capable of meeting the WWH criteria. Streams and rivers in heavily urbanized and modified watersheds will most likely only be able to meet MWH or LRW criteria.

Each aquatic life use designation has certain criteria that have to be met in order to be in attainment of that ALU. Following a biological survey, scores are given for habitat, or what is known as Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index (QHEI). Scores are also given for macroinvertebrate assemblages, known as the Invertebrate Community Index (ICI), and fish assemblages, known as the Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) and Modified Index of Well-Being (MIwb). If a site has high fish diversity with several pollutant intolerant species, the fish IBI will score high.

These scores have to fall within the biocriteria range of the certain ALU in order to meet full attainment of that ALU. If one particular score, for example the QHEI, does not fall under the biocriteria for a Warmwater Habitat designated site, then the site will not be in full attainment. These surveys determine the aquatic life status and can give us insight into whether there are outside factors that may be impacting habitat or fish and macroinvertebrate communities, leading to unhealthy stream ecosystems. This data can support efforts to restore and protect streams and river ecosystems in Butler County and all throughout Ohio.

If you are interested and want to learn more about habitat preservation, visit butlerswcd.org and check out our Facebook page for information and volunteer opportunity updates.

Smallmouth Bass

Maddy Miner, Education Intern

With the summer season kicking into full gear, everyone is ready to get back out on the waters and go fishing.

Wherever your favorite fishing spot is, you've likely ran into one of Ohio's most common species of fish, the smallmouth bass. Also known as *Micropterus dolomieu*, the smallmouth bass are native to every county in Ohio. It is a common species in fishing tournaments, but can be tricky to catch along with their counterparts, the largemouth bass.

Smallmouth bass are very similar to largemouth bass, and you may not be able to tell the difference unless you have experience fishing. Nevertheless, there are some minor differences used to differentiate between them. The first being their mouths. As the name implies, smallmouth bass have a smaller mouth than largemouth do. You can also look at their dorsal fin on their backside. A smallmouth's dorsal fin will appear more connected between its first and second dorsal, with a small bridge where it dips down. A largemouth's will have a more prominent dip between the first and second dorsal, with a larger bridge appearing less connected.



Smallmouth Bass

Smallmouth bass have a slender build, on average weighing 1 - 2 pounds and ranging 12 - 15 inches in length. Most often, their color ranges between brown and green, with 3 characteristic dark streaks radiating from snout to eye across gill covers. They're darkest in color on their backsides, usually brown then transitioning into green, and are lighter in color on their belly, usually a yellow-white appearance. On average, they have a life span ranging from 6 - 14 years, but some have been known to live up to 20 years. Smallmouth primarily feed on crayfish, small fish, and other macroinvertebrates.

Native to the eastern half of the United States and southeastern Canada, smallmouth bass live primarily in freshwater streams and rivers. They prefer deeper, less vegetated areas than largemouth do, and typically areas with moderate-to-high gradient streams and rougher substrates, such as gravel or rock. They also do well in large clear-water lakes. Smallmouths do not thrive as much in shallower areas with softer substrates. They are often found hiding in around large rock or woody debris.

Because they prefer a deeper water habitat, smallmouth bass often spawn later than largemouth bass do, which prefer shallower water. The colder temperatures in deep waters take longer to warm to optimal temperatures for spawning. Additionally, deeper water has less vegetation to protect the eggs than shallow water does. Smallmouth males will create their nests in circular depressions in sand or gravel in the deeper levels of streams and lakes. They prefer to nest near logs or large rocks.

Since the 19th and 20th centuries, the smallmouth bass population has experienced a net decrease in size, largely due to increased deforestation, pollution, water turbidities, over-fishing, and the use of dams. In more recent years, the population has started to increase again near the Ohio River, Lake Erie, and many other Ohio streams. While their distribution remains stable, they have never fully recovered to their original population size.

Pollinator Fest

Save-the-date

Date: Saturday, September 30, 2023

Butler SWCD is hosting its first ever pollinator fest in the Agriculture Conservation Education Demonstration Site, at 1802 Princeton Road, Hamilton, OH 45011. Rain or shine help us celebrate pollinators.

Informational booths and tours will be available. Guests can pick one free sunflower to take home with them. Seed giveaways, honey for sale, and much more!

Is your organization interested in taking part? Contact Butler SWCD for a vendor form - cost is free.

Come see what all the buzz is about!

Pond Precautions

Brady Smith, Rural Specialist

With dry, hot summer days ahead, Butler SWCD urges caution to pond owners. What does this mean for you if you own a pond? Without a steady supply of rainfall, pond waters can become stagnant. No new water coming in also means that no old water is flowing out. Water levels are dropping due to evaporation and dissolved oxygen levels are also depleting. This is especially concerning in larger ponds that have bigger layers of stratification. Stratified ponds typically have 3 zones.

Zone 1 - the hot upper layer, commonly home to aquatic weeds and algae.

Zone 2 - the middle layer, often oxygen rich and home to many fish.

Zone 3 - the bottom layer, often filled with dead and decaying organism, toxic gasses, and muck.

Although the constant dry heat isn't a huge concern, it's the sudden change in weather, like a rapid rainfall event, that could cause a pond to "flip". When a pond flips it simply means that the stratified layers or "zones" in the pond become mixed. Water from zone 3 comes up from the bottom and mixes with zones 1 and 2 thus causing a fish kill. Cool winds or rains often trigger a pond to flip; once this process takes place there is nothing to stop it.

The best method is to take preventative measures ahead of time like installing aerators, stopping or pausing chemical treatments for algae and aquatic weeds, and using water dyes. If you have specific questions about pond management please call Butler SWCD to set up an appointment for us to come out and assess your pond for potential problems.



Farm Service Agency News

Farm Service Agency (FSA) upcoming program deadlines.

July 17 - Acreage Certification

Acreage reporting is required to establish or maintain eligibility for many FSA programs. Please remember to follow the acreage reporting process guidelines. The final acreage reporting certification date for several crops, including corn, soybeans, and hay is July 17, 2023.

August 1 - County Committee Nomination

FSA encourages all farmers and FSA program participants to take part in the Butler/Hamilton County Committee election nomination process. FSA's county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs. Any agricultural producer who participates or cooperates in an FSA program within LAA #3 may be nominated. LAA #3 is comprised of Fairfield, Hanover, Morgan, Ross, and St. Clair Townships. Nominating forms can be requested at the Butler/Hamilton County FSA office by August 1, 2023.

For additional FSA program information, visit www.farmers.gov or schedule an appointment with your local FSA office, located in Hamilton, Ohio, please call (513) 642-3715.

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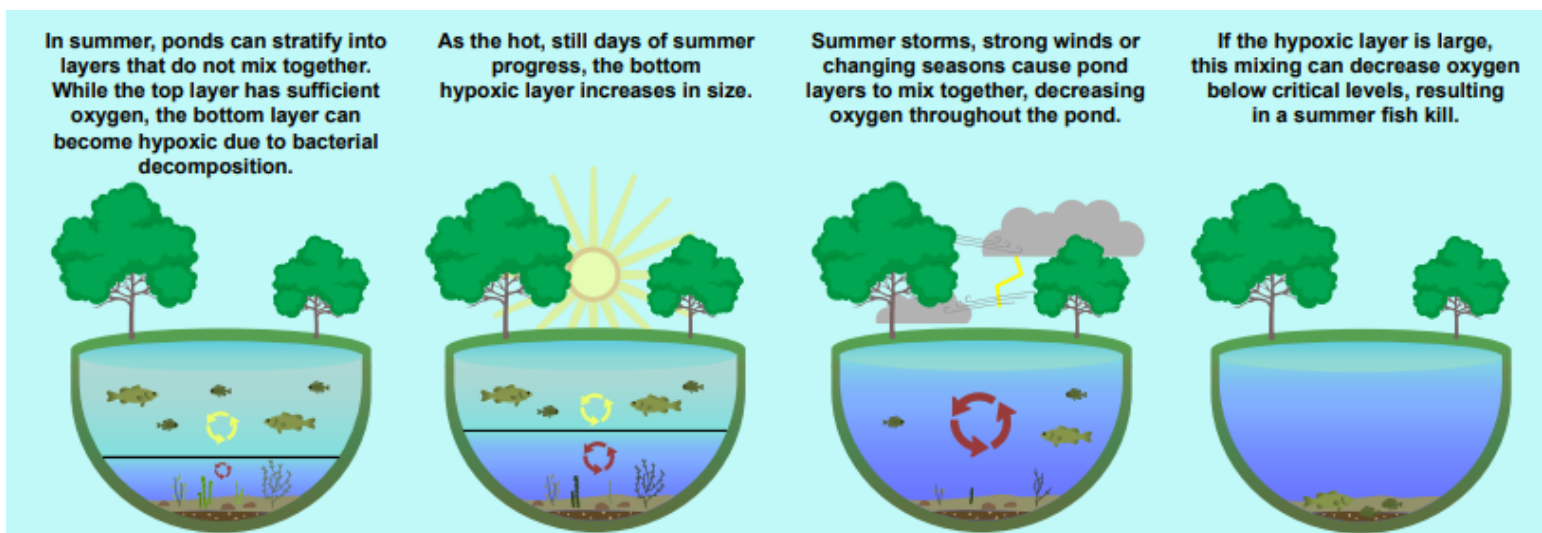


Photo Credit: Purdue Extension, Jade Layman

Gail Lierer Crop Ins. Agency

Gail Lierer
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Rob Rich

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Date: September 16, 2023

Time: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Find a location near you & sign-up at:
www.cleansweepofthegreatmiamiriver.org



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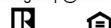
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Hamilton, OH 45013

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butler@ofbf.org

BUTLER COUNTY

Cover Crop Field Day

Date: August 30, 2023

Time: 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Location: TBD

For questions & to register email/phone
smithbe@butlercountyohio.org
(513) 785-6663

Free Proposal:
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jonesfish.com

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USDA: An Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer, and Lender.

Upcoming Events

- **Passport to Fishing:** July 15
- **Creeking in the Parks:** July 20
- **Butler County Fair:** July 23 - 29
- **Butler SWCD Election:** July 29 - August 27
- **BEST Volunteer, Rain Garden Clean Up:** August 9
- **Board Meeting:** August 10
- **Annual Meeting:** August 15
- **Garden Series:** August 23
- **Hamilpalooza:** August 26
- **Cover Crop Field Day:** August 30
- **Office Closed, Labor Day:** September 4
- **Board Meeting:** September 14
- **BEST Volunteer, Clean Sweep:** September 16
- **Farm Science Review:** September 19 - 21
- **Pollinator Fest:** September 30

- **Board Meeting:** October 12
- **BEST Volunteer, Habitat Restoration:** October 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

