



Conservation Connection

January 2023

The Urban Voice, Etta Reed

What's it take to be a board member? We say *'it's only one meeting a month.'* Now, I wouldn't say it's a down right lie, for that implies we are not telling the truth. And honestly, for some board members, being a supervisor is only one meeting a month. The next thing we tell them is *'it's how much time you want to put into it.'* That's the real truth. How much time do you want to spend on meetings talking about conservation, whether they be local, state, or even national? Recently I sat down with past board member, Etta Reed, to ask how that one line *'it's only one meeting a month'* lead her to sitting on the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission for 12 years now.

Etta's story is similar in some aspects to board members all across Ohio - her father had been a Butler SWCD board member in the 1990s - our district was looking for someone to run, so naturally they asked her. Etta said she knew who we were because of her father, but wasn't sure she really wanted to do it. However, she spoke with her father who told her it would be *'a great opportunity to meet people and another way to give back to the community.'*

Where Etta's story differs from the majority of board members across the state is that she came from a business and urban background, far different from the typical agricultural background. As a licensed Professional Civil Engineer, Etta is the Principal and Vice President of Transportation and Engineering at Bayer Becker. Bayer Becker is a civil engineering, surveying, planning, and architecture firm. Etta oversees a staff of 25 professionals who provide Civil Engineering design services for both private developments and public infrastructure improvements. Her skill set and background gave her a different perspective on conservation. She was elected to the Butler SWCD board in 2007.

While serving the Butler SWCD board, Etta was also an Area 4 Director for the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, heading up the Urban Task Force. After serving a few years on the board, she was asked to throw her hat in the ring for the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission (OSWCC). Per the ODA, the "OSWCC is a seven person board of equal status and authority, six of whom shall be appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the senate, and one of whom shall be designated by resolution of the board of director of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts." The main functions of the OSWCC are to: determine the allocation of state match funds to SWCD's, issue appropriate rules and policies governing the election of SWCD supervisors, recommend programs and legislation to state officials relative to SWCD's, and both foster and promote cooperation of state agencies on behalf of SWCD's and facilitate networking among all Ohio SWCDs.

Etta not only had to apply by filling out an application, but also had to submit a resume to the governor's office. She was appointed by former Governor John Kasich in 2011. For a time, Etta served both Butler SWCD and the OSWCC. However, in 2013, it was of the opinion of the former Attorney General that those serving on... **continued on page 6**



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Winter Life in Streams

Ashlee Widener, Water Resource Specialist

With the temperatures recently dropping below zero, you may start to see surface water freezing on nearby ponds, lakes, and streams. Water freezes at 0°C or 32°F. When water freezes, it expands and becomes less dense than its liquid form, causing the ice to float. Ice formation from the surface down-plays an integral part in the survival of aquatic life during the winter. This sheet of ice can help provide some insulation and heat retention from winter extremes. Warmer water will also tend to sink towards the bottom where aquatic life will retreat during colder temperatures. If ice was to form from the bottom up, any available habitat such as boulders and tree roots would no longer be accessible. Sheets of ice can be common in ponds and smaller lakes in the colder months. When the water column warms up as the temperature changes, the ice will melt and seasonal turnover can occur.

In streams, flowing water can create conditions different from what we might see in a lake or pond. In turbulent waters like runs and riffles, the mixing of the water column in extremely cold temperatures can cause the water to become super-cooled. This can cause the occurrence of suspended, slushy ice, sometimes call frazil ice. This ice can stick to surfaces in the water such as rocks and wood, limiting available habitat space. The ice can also stick to the bottom forming anchor ice. This may cause issues with fish and invertebrates looking to remain in those spots and force them to find other habitats.



Dry Fork in Morgan Township in February.

Other issues that aquatic fish and bugs might face in the winter are pollution. In urban areas with lots of impervious surfaces (pavement, rooftops, parking lots, etc.), melting snow can add excess water into these streams which can cause an increase in sedimentation and erosion along streambanks. Snow melt can also carry pollutants like chemicals and trash into the streams that can be toxic to aquatic animals. Road salt (NaCl) has become an alarming pollutant in the recent years as

it is used abundantly to help clear roads during winter weather. Excess salt in freshwater systems can be toxic to aquatic life and once it enters the waterways, it stays. Salts can also contaminate groundwater, soils, harm roadside plants, and corrode automobiles, bridges, and roads.



Four Mile Creek in Oxford in late March.

While turtles and frogs can hibernate, fish and aquatic invertebrates cannot. During the spring and summer months, streams come to life with productivity. As temperatures warm up and the sun comes out, fish and macroinvertebrates are more active. In the winter, however, streams are not as productive, but you can still find some fish and macroinvertebrates. One example is the winter stonefly, which emerge during the winter months to mate. Overwintering fish and macroinvertebrates are cold blooded and enter into a state where they slow their metabolic rates and become more sluggish. Fish tend to take cover in deep pools, under boulders, root wads, or woody debris. Smaller fish and macroinvertebrates can live in smaller spaces under cobble and gravel on the stream bed. When ice is not present on or under these habitats, aquatic organisms can reside there to survive the winter. If there is a groundwater seep entering a stream, this water tends to be warmer than the surface water. Fish and other organisms tend to congregate near these spots as it can provide protection from the extreme cold.

Streams are generally studied in the warmer months when fish and bugs are most active, typically late spring through early fall. If you are interested in flipping some rocks or looking in your local stream for some cool fish or bugs, you may want to consider waiting until it warms up. When warmer weather arrives, Butler County has some great streams to explore, such as Elk Creek, Indian Creek, and Gregory Creek.

2 Sources: Trout Unlimited Canada, Midwest Biodiversity Institute.

Planning Your 2023 Fertilizer Budget

Brady Smith, Rural Specialist

Nutrients power our world. Everything from the crops grown across the Midwest to the Redwoods in California all require nutrients to make them grow, and maybe some sunlight and rainfall too. What we know about crop nutrients, how plants use them, and how they react to different weather and soil conditions is constantly growing. From a scientific standpoint we have only been studying soil chemistry since the 1850's, a small clip in agrarian history. Recent developments in water quality concerns, like algal blooms on the Grand Lake and the Gulf of Mexico, have fueled the need and curiosity of soil scientists, water quality advocates, farmers, and other industry leaders. Environmental and economic proponents are driving crop producers to be more efficient in their choices of nutrient sources, application times, and application rates. Commercial fertilizers are required by law to have published analysis of nutrient contents published on liquid jug labels, dry fertilizer bags, or batch tickets if buying bulk loads.

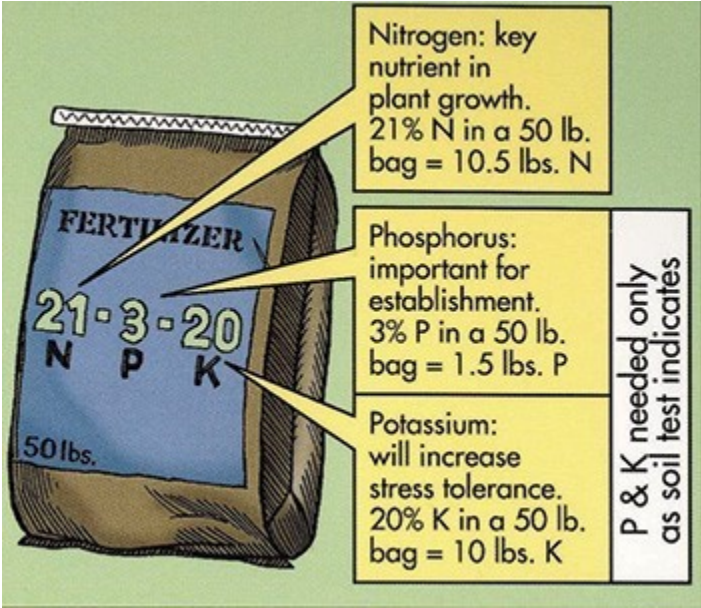


Photo Credit: Cornell University Turfgrass Program.

Commercial fertilizers are chemically produced from mined sources such as phosphate rocks or natural gas sources and are highly potent mixes; a little goes a long way! But as with all natural resources, we only have so much of it. Experts estimate we may only have 50 years left in the global phosphate mines, much of which come from Canada, or along the Coast of Africa. Because these are non-renewable resources traded on a global scale, costs can fluctuate with market demand and as we have learned the last 2 years that global supply chain crises can affect prices. Because of these economic concerns, some farmers have taken a closer look at other nutrient sources. In the last 50 years farms have increased in size, became more specialized, and many have moved away from

having livestock on the farm, thus further driving the need for commercial fertilizers. Farms that still have a source of manure need to consider strategies like soil tests, manure tests, and proper manure spreading techniques like spread patterns and calibration to ensure conscious use of nutrients. Let's break it down so we can understand it better.

Current Fertilizer Prices for Butler County, Ohio

11-52-0 (Monoammonium Phosphate/MAP)	\$1,000
0-0-60 (Potash)	\$900
28-0-0	\$630
10-34-0	\$975

All Prices reported in per ton basis, quoted 6/22/

Animal Type and Storage Type	Estimated Nutrient Content ¹					
	Lbs/Ton			Lbs/1000 Gallons		
	N	P ₂ O ₅	K ₂ O	N	P ₂ O ₅	K ₂ O
Poultry ³						
Manure Pack	52	72	38			

¹ Values vary with bedding, water content, feed programs, and specific livestock.

² Values are for the supernatant (unagitated liquid on the top of the lagoon).

³ Poultry—based on typical analysis from poultry barns from Ohio NRCS records.

Source: Manure Characteristics, MWPS-18, Section 1, 2000, and Purdue MMP version 1.9.4. Used by permission.

Photo Credit: Ohio Livestock Manure Management Guide, Bulletin 604, Table 14.

For this comparison we chose to use poultry litter since it is the most commonly available and easiest to haul form of manure, when purchasing through a manure broker. With animal manure it is easy to see how this can improve profitability while building soil nutrients. Other research shows the biologic benefits may be even greater in terms of soil health. The drawbacks to manure are that not all livestock species manure is nutritionally complete for crop growth, so it is likely that producers will have to supplement with other nutrient sources to meets all fertility needs of the crop. Typically farmers will manage for the most limiting factor, which in this case happens to be P205 (Phosphorous) and then apply other sources to balance the difference.

In the northern portions of Butler County we are starting to see poultry litter coming into the area based on the proximity to large turkey and chicken farms in Darke County, and access to major roads for trucking. Poultry litter is easily spread by conventional application equipment and is one of the most nutrient dense forms of manure available. As always, it is important to consult with experts before making a decision. Talking to your Certified Crop Advisor, getting accurate and current soil tests, manure tests, fertilizer prescriptions, and manure management plans are all important parts of the process to ensure our nutrients stay where they are supposed to and give you the best results. As always, Butler SWCD is here for your nutrient management journey. We offer free nutrient management plans, manure spreader calibration training, and many other programs. Give us a call today!

Interested in more information about nutrient management? Plan to attend our free National Ag Day Breakfast, where a variety of speakers will be on hand to talk about current research being done in Ohio.



2023 Tree & Shrub Sale

Butler SWCD is excited to announce the 2023 Tree & Shrub Sale is back in-house! Unlike the past few years where we teamed up with Warren and Greene Counties, the District will be handling all online orders. Help us make 2023 the best tree sale yet!

How to Order:

Online ordering will begin on **Monday, January 30** at 9 AM, visit www.butlerswcd.org/treesale to place orders. Please note that we are unable to refund tree sale orders or ship trees. Last day to order will be **Friday, March 17, 2023**. Tree and Shrub species will again be sold in packs of 5 bare root seedlings or 8 live stakes, 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 **Friday, February 17, 2023**, so we can ensure large quantities will be available.

Pick-up Dates:

Thursday, April 6, 2023	9:00 AM - 7:00 PM
Friday, April 7, 2023	9:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Pick-up Location:

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

Sales Tax:

We are required by the state of Ohio to collect sales tax on all orders. If you need to make a tax exempt purchase please call our offices at (513) 887-3720. You will be required to provide an exemption form, found on our tree sale web page, in order for us to place your order.

Other Important Information:

We can neither alter the contents of packs upon request, nor deliver them to your home. If conditions exist beyond our control, we also reserve the right to substitute species in the packs. 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.

*Orders not picked up by **Friday, April 14, 2023** will be donated to a local conservation group.*

Tree & Shrub Highlights

Lynn White, Education & Volunteer Specialist

With a great variety of native tree and shrub species on our list this year, let's take an in-depth view of two not so well known species.

White Fringe Tree

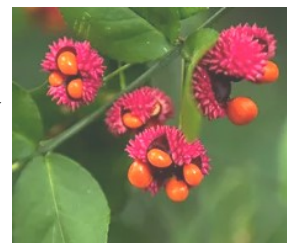
A great native alternative to the often planted Dogwood tree, the White Fringe Tree also has great flower coverage in the spring. The fringe tree's most outstanding feature is the fragrant white flowers that are borne in 6 to 8 inch long fleecy panicles in late May to early June. The drooping clusters of white blossoms give the tree the appearance of being laced with an elaborate white fringe, hence the name. You might hear some other common names, such as "Grancy Graybeard" or "Man Beard Tree". Female blossoms produce dark blue, grape like clusters of fruit bringing more seasonal interest. The ripening fruit is eagerly anticipated by birds and other wildlife.



It may look delicate, but this native tree is adaptable over a wide range of growing hardiness zones. This is a great, non-fussy tree. They'll even tolerate air pollution, and so make a good urban tree. In your landscape, their shorter stature means they work well under utility lines. A cluster of them make a great backdrop to a shrub boarder.

Strawberry Bush / Wahoo Shrub

The traditional burning bush much loved by gardeners is non-native and are actually classed as invasive. Don't fret, the Strawberry Bush / Wahoo Shrub is the native *Euonymus*. It has all the charm of its Asian cousin, without the aggressive personality. The only noticeable difference for most gardeners is that the native Strawberry Bush / Wahoo Shrub has pretty maroon flowers, whereas the invasive has greenish-white flowers.



The Strawberry Bush / Wahoo Shrub has striking red and pink fruit in late summer and pink to red fall colors. This colorful fruit can persist until mid-winter, after the leaves have fallen. The fruit's crimson pods split in mid-autumn to reveal scarlet-coated seeds. The plant is sometimes called "Hearts Bursting with Love" due to the exotic appearance of the opened fruit.

For the best fall color, plant in full sun. However, it tolerates part sun and a wide range of soil conditions, with the exception of soggy, wet soil.

To view a full list of trees and shrubs that will be a part of this year's sale visit www.butlerswcd.org/treesale.

Live Staking 101

Nichole Banks, Natural Resource Tech

Throughout the county, streambank erosion has become a large concern for many homeowners. With Butler County rapidly developing and extreme rain events becoming more common, our streams are trying to accommodate for an increase in water level and disturbance. Streambanks that are left bare without vegetation are susceptible to erosion where soils can be washed away during high water flows. Streambank erosion can lead to loss of land, deeply channelized streams, loss of habitat, and sediment pollution. One very inexpensive and natural way to help mitigate stream bank erosion is through 'live staking'.

What is live staking? Live staking is when a cutting is taken from certain wet loving trees and shrubs and is then planted into the wet soils of streambanks. These woody plants will root quickly and begin growth within the first few weeks to the first few months of the growing season, holding in the soil as well as absorbing water. Depending on your goal, there are anywhere from large trees to small shrubs that can be used in this manner. This practice is typically very inexpensive and does not require permits since you are simply re-vegetating a site.

How do I get live stakes? The first step is to assess your site. Note the height of the bank and if it's sunny or shaded; this will help determine which plants are the best fit. Next is to retrieve dormant cuttings from specific wet loving woody plants. You can do this yourself if you have some of these plants on your property, purchase in bulk from nurseries that specialize in live staking plants, or purchase streambank stabilization kits from the Butler SWCD 2023 Tree & Shrub Sale. Make sure to choose the correct plants for your site, making sure to account for the plant's needs like sun or shade.

The best time to retrieve the cutting yourself is during the dormant season, from late fall to early spring before the buds break. Installation should happen during this time period as well. Be sure to not install or harvest during high water events for your safety as well as live staking best practices. Also, don't retrieve the cuttings too far ahead of planting; they need to stay moist, so the more time between harvesting and planting the more likely they will dry out. Be sure to not take too much from the source tree and ensure the plants are healthy. The cutting should be anywhere from 2-3 feet long, cut flat at the top, and at a 45 degree angle where the roots will emerge. Sealing the flat top with beeswax can help keep moisture in. Make sure to store these partially submerged in water in a cool, shaded place until ready to plant.

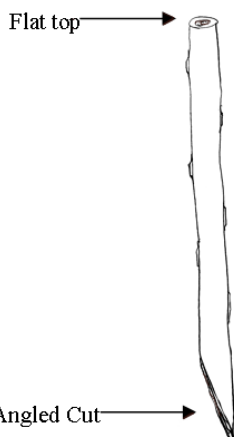
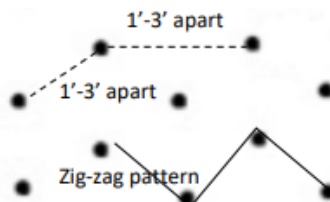


Photo Credit: PennState Extension 5

How do I live stake my streambank? Live stakes must be planted in saturated soils; too far up on the streambank and they won't have enough water to root. There are other options for creating a buffer zone higher up on the streambank where it's drier, but live stakes do require wet soil. Make sure your banks aren't too rocky or too silty for safe and effective live staking.

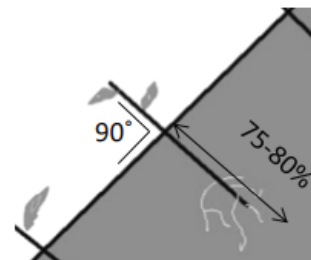
When planting, make sure to recut the rooting end of the stake before sticking it into the soil, and have a plan for where the plants will help the most, make sure to account



for the full size of what you're planting! A good idea is to plant in a zig-zag pattern 1 to 3 feet apart.

The cutting should be at a 90 degree angle with the soil it's being planted into. If the soil is too compacted, a piece of

rebar can be used to start a hole the plant can be placed into. It should be planted about a foot deep; a rubber mallet can be used to push it into the ground, but be careful not to damage the stake. Between 75 - 80% of the live stake should be in the ground, with buds present above and below the soil.



Once the growing season starts, you should see new growth emerge either from the stake itself, or around where the stake was planted, depending on the species.

Photo credit: Hamilton County SWCD.

Butler County Agricultural Fertilizer Training

Fertilizer certification is required if you apply fertilizer, other than manure, to more than 50 acres of agricultural production grown primarily for sale. If you have a co-op or other custom applicator make your fertilizer applications, you do not need the certification.

Date:

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

Location:

OSU Extension - Butler County
1802 Princeton Rd, Hamilton 45011

Time:

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Cost:

\$35 (Class only), Check payable to OSU Extension

Contact / RSVP by March 21, 2023:

J.T. Benitez - benitez.6@osu.edu - (513) 887-3722

The Urban Voice continued...

... the OSWCC could not also serve on their local SWCD board. Etta had to make a choice, Butler SWCD or OSWCC? During this period of time the commission only had two urban representatives: Fred Cash and Etta herself. All others came from an agricultural background. Etta explained that "I felt that I would better serve the districts on the Commission. Not that I didn't love the county; I love the county, but I just felt like I could do a better job up there and do better for more districts than Butler if I stayed at the commission level rather than just at the county level."

Etta offers another perspective being urban based and business-minded. Most notably, Etta continues to advocate the important conservation work that urban districts are doing, "[I try to be the] urban voice - I bring the business aspect as well to the commission... Etta emphasized that "I just enjoy that part of it, in trying to educate [the urban] side of [conservation] - it impacts all of us and we impact it in return... Most people think [conservation] is just agriculture. And until you've been around and involved in it you don't realize it's more than that. I tried, back on the Urban Task Force, to get more districts focused on the urban component."

"Every district has urban. I think the problem is when people say 'urban' people think 'oh it's inner city or it's where there's a dense development.' No, urban is anything. [Urban] is not really the right word to use, but we don't have a better word. It's basically anything that's not agriculture. Every land use impacts our natural resources."

The commission, much like local districts, has changed over the past 12 years Etta has been on it. Currently, there are members who have previous backgrounds with local SWCDs, agriculture, and technical sciences. The dynamics of the commission shifts with each new appointment. Etta says that it's a good thing, "that it brings new questions and makes you think a little more." The commission is now bringing in different presenters during each of their meetings to inform all members on what districts do and the diversity within the districts. The goal is to educate the commission members to make better decisions for all 88 districts in Ohio.

When asked about the future of districts, Etta's answer was that the "educational programs districts do are amazing, especially with the schools and children... the more outreach we can do for the public to educate them on what we do will only make the districts stronger."

Impressively, Etta has been re-appointed for another 3 year term by Governor DeWine and has been the OSWCC Chairperson since 2021. She is also serving at the national level on the NACD Urban Resource Policy Group. Etta has to reapply each time to be on the OSWCC; it's not a given. She serves on her own will and the will of the Governor; there's no guarantee of her position with OSWCC.

In regards to serving the commission she said "I enjoy it. The only reason I stepped down from the local [Butler SWCD is because I had to choose], I had to make a decision. If I ever didn't get reappointed I would come back. I've been involved in a lot of organizations through the work I do and I will say the soil and water districts are some of the best people I have ever worked with in my life... they are very genuine. No egos, they will help you, they are willing to share their stories. So many amazing people all across the state of Ohio, and even in other states."

One thing that is interesting is that it doesn't matter if you're from a rural community, a city, or anywhere in between, conservation affects everyone. It is evident by Etta's passion and the way she spoke warmly about her time at Butler SWCD that although her story is not typical, it is important to realize that everyone can offer something in terms of conservation and the future of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

So, if you find yourself thinking you could do one meeting a month, or possibly even more, please consider taking the time to talk with us about becoming a board member. You never know where it may lead you.

Article written by Kelly Crout, District Director.

Congratulations to the 2022 Butler SWCD Award Winners

Outstanding Cooperator - Stephan Janos

Friend of Conservation - Hamilton's Urban Backyard

Joe Dudley Outstanding Conservationist - Al Gerhart

Conservation Educator - Julia Robinson

Butler SWCD Scholarship

The District is offering a non-renewable \$500 college scholarship to students enrolling in classes which focus on the conservation of natural resources.



Entry Deadline: February 28

For a complete list of eligibility requirements and guidelines, please visit www.butlerswcd.org/grants.

Master Rain Gardener

Registration is now open for the Spring 2023 course. This season, classes will be held in Butler County. MRG is a 5 day course that take place over 6 weeks. During the course students learn rain garden design and the installation process.

Visit www.cincyraingardener.org to register.

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

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Tree Sale
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 Pickup Dates: April 6 - 7

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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

- **Paddy's Run Public Meeting:** January 28
- **Tree & Shrub Sale Online Ordering:** January 30
- **BEST Volunteer, Teacher Kits:** February 8
- **Board Meeting:** February 9
- **Office Closed, President's Day:** February 20
- **Garden Series:** February 22
- **Butler SWCD Scholarship Deadline:** February 28
- **BEST Volunteer, Harvest Live Stakes:** March 4
- **Board Meeting:** March 9
- **Ag Day Breakfast / Nutrient Management Workshop:** March 19
- **Septic System Workshop:** March 25
- **BEST Volunteer, Canal & Bird Sanctuary Cleanup:** March 25
- **BEST Volunteer, Tree Packing:** April 1
- **Tree & Shrub Sale Pick-up:** April 6-7

- **Board Meeting:** April 13
- **Southwest Ohio Woodland Owners Association Meeting:** April 15
- **Pond Clinic:** April, exact date TBD
- **ArBeer Day Event:** April 28
- **BEST Volunteer, Habitat Restoration:** April 29

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

