

**Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission
Quarterly Meeting – April 20, 2016
Ohio Department of Agriculture
Plant Industries Building
8995 East Main Street
1st Floor Conference Room
Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068**

Call to Order (10:02 a.m.)

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call Commission Members Present

Chairman Tom Price
Vice-Chairman Fred Cash
Bill Tom
Larry Vance (late arrival 10:30)

Ex-Officio Members Present

Kevin Elder
Russ Gibson
Kris Swartz (Represented by Mindy Bankey)
Scott Shearer

Additional Attendees

Terry Mescher (ODA-DSWC), Nikki Hawk (Mercer SWCD), TaTrecia Davis (USDA-NRCS) Lisa Syx (ODA-DSWC) Rick Wilson (OEPA-DSW), Amanda Bennett (ODA-Farmland Preservation), Mike Libben (OASWCDE), Brandi Koehler (USDA-FSA), Matt Lane (ODA-DSWC), Emily Heppner (ODA-DSWC), Rob Hamilton (ODA-DSWC), Dorothy Farris (ODA-DSWC)

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Price recognized the lack of a quorum and would bring up approval of minutes later in the agenda once other members were in attendance.

Chief Hines noted two changes to the February 24, 2016 meeting minutes: corrected spelling of Ed Elliott's name in Larry Vance's member report and OSWCC July tour on page 6 April 20 was to be changed to July 20.

Commission Member Reports

Fred Cash reported that Greenwood farms coordinated with the Girl Scouts to plant local gardens and things are progressing well. He acknowledged that the Republican Convention is being held in Cleveland this summer. Chairman Price updated those in attendance on Bill Knapke's condition and asked everyone to keep him in thoughts and prayers.

Executive Secretary Report

Board Appointments

Chief Hines presented SWCD Board appointment requests from Lawrence, Pike, and Knox SWCDs. Chairman Price recognized the lack of a quorum and would bring up approval of board appointments later in the agenda once other members were in attendance.

Approval of Joint Boards

No joint board requests

Division of Soil and Water Conservation Update

Chief Hines reported that the first notice of violation was issued for application of manure on frozen/snow covered ground. This violation was issued as part of the new rules created within Senate Bill 1. ODA issued the maximum penalty of a \$2,000 fine for this incident. Hines also reported that as part of the division's ongoing efforts within the Lake Erie Watershed that DSWC staff has been working with other agencies on the development of the Western Lake Erie Basin Collaborative. The primary goal of the collaborative is to reach a forty percent reduction in phosphorus contributed to Lake Erie by 2025. The division is working on developing practices and strategies to help achieve the reduction.

Chief Hines provided an update on staffing. An administrative professional position for the division was recently posted. DSWC Program Specialists will now serve as the first point of contact for SWCDs on all pollution abatement complaints. This change will better allow state-wide coverage and assistance on all pollution abatement related complaints.

Regarding communications, Hines reported that the 2016 Conservation Partnership Roster was recently updated and new copies will be distributed to SWCDs soon.

Chief Hines reported that DSWC staff joined Director Daniels on March 16, 2016 to celebrate Ag Week in Ohio. The celebration was held at a farm in Highland County where various conservation programs and practices were highlighted. Hines noted that Highland SWCD was the first district formed in the state so it was fitting to have the celebration in this county.

Dorothy Farris, ODA-DSWC, SWCD Section Administrator, pointed out that the 3rd quarter financial reports from the Conservation Assistant Grants are available for review. Farris also stated that there will most likely be fewer districts that apply for Conservation Assistant Grants in the upcoming year.

Financial Disclosure

Chief Hines reminded OSWCC members that financial disclosure statements are due mid-May. Russ Gibson asked a question regarding whether financial disclosure is necessary for Ex-Officio members. Hines noted that DSWC will check with legal and get further guidance on this matter.

Revenue Report Update and Estimated FY 2017 Match

Lisa Syx provided an update and reviewed funding spent for this fiscal year from 5BVO and General Revenue Fund (GRF) accounts as documented in the fiscal reports presented in the member packets. Syx acknowledged that SFY 2017 funding levels will remain the same as it was for SFY 2016.

Next, Syx reviewed the 2017 State Match Estimate also as presented in the member packets. Dorothy Farris commented that estimates for local appropriations are up seven percent from the previous year. Chairman Price asked for further explanation for the \$350,000 for Senate Bill 1. Chief Hines explained that approximately one-half of the amounts are shared among the 24 SWCDs in the Western Lake Erie Basin. The remaining funding is spent on multi-county grant applications for technical assistance in the Western Lake Erie Basin.

Chief Hines reviewed the Fund 5BVO Ending Cash Balance report and indicated the fund could not be spent without additional appropriation spending authority from the State Controlling Board. Fred Cash noted that having a reserve balance is prudent and puts the OSWCC in a position to continue conservation programs in future tight budget years.

Match Policy

Dorothy Farris highlighted the changes in Match Policy as a result of the OSWCC State Match Policy Task Force. Farris noted that this year's formula will change from 125 percent to 150 percent on the

first \$20,000 in local appropriations. Farris highlighted that the OSWCC State Match Policy recommended 25 percent of a district's operating budget be in place as unassigned funds. This allows for district operations to continue when there is a delay or shortfall in receiving operational funding. Farris also highlighted that part of the OSWCC State Match Policy discourages SWCDs from having excessive cash fund balances. Beginning in 2018 SWCDs with operating budgets in excess of \$150,000 and combined total balance of Special and District funds (less non-spendable, restricted, and contingency funds) in excess of 200 percent of the 2017 operating budget would be subject to possible reduced state match funding. Farris noted that to help SWCDs prepare for the OSWCC State Match Policy changes the Form 11 that is used to document local appropriations and determine state match has been amended for this year.

Form 11 Revisions for Approval

Farris reviewed the State Match Form 11 and attached appendices provided in the members' packet. Farris noted changes on the first page which included the "1.a. Eligible County Stormwater Appropriation" line. She explained this new line on the form was added to collect information relevant to changes in the Ohio Revised Code (House Bill 64). She noted the Appendix B is the supplemental form used to document local funds eligibility as a result of House Bill 64 changes. Farris noted that the Appendix A page of the form was created to help districts comply with OSWCC State Match Policy by evaluating cash fund balances. Farris stated the program specialists have tested and evaluated the use of the form with a several SWCDs. Farris noted this part of the OSWCC State Match Policy will come into effect in 2018 and it is beneficial to begin preparing SWCDs that may be subject to a future reduction in state match funds. Farris mentioned that with future uncertainty of the current Cash Basis Report used by districts, the division will need the ability to change this form based on any changes mandated by the State Auditor.

Action: Fred Cash moved to approve the revised Form 11 with the understanding that changes may be needed to Appendix A in the future. Larry Vance seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

July OSWCC Meeting and Tour

Chief Hines reminded OSWCC members that the July meeting will be held on the 20th and 21st of July. July 20th will be a tour and July 21st will be the OSWCC meeting date. The meeting will be held in Harrison County in the Cadiz area. More details will be provided to OSWCC members.

Approval of Meeting Minutes and Board Appointments

Action: Fred Cash moved to approve the meeting minutes with the two previously stated changes and the following SWCD appointments: Lawrence SWCD- Larry Bare, Pike SWCD- David Lee, and Knox SWCD- Douglas Grassbaugh. Bill Tom seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Grand Lake St. Marys Update

Terry Mescher provided an update on the progress for implementing the distressed watershed rules in the Grand Lake St. Marys Watershed. To date, 141 nutrient management plans have been developed and reviewed.

Nikki Hawk provided a handout on behalf of Mercer SWCD. The handout summarizes the work completed and assistance provided by the Mercer SWCD towards implementation of the distressed watershed rules. Hawk thanked the OSWCC for their support and requested continued financial support to employ two Nutrient Management technicians to work with livestock producers in the distressed watershed.

Farmland Preservation Update

Amanda Bennett presented on ODA's Farmland Preservation Program. Bennett highlighted the work of the SWCDs and their support of the program as local easement sponsors, and through monitoring and inspecting agricultural easements.

Election Form Changes

Dorothy Farris presented a new Statement of Candidacy form to be used for SWCD elections this year. The purpose of this form is to ensure that the candidates name is accurately reflected on the ballot and that the candidate acknowledges their voting residence, legal residence, and desire to be a candidate.

Action: Larry Vance moved to approve the Statement of Candidacy form. Fred Cash seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Joint Board Recommendations Priorities

Dorothy Farris reviewed the Joint Board Recommendation priorities with the members of the OSWCC. Farris will develop a working timeline to implement the recommendations provided by the Joint Board Task Force.

Agency Reports:

OSU

Scott Shearer reported that Bruce McPherson has moved into the acting Provost role at OSU. Ron Hendrick will be leaving OSU. Shearer remarked that OSU's Field to Faucet program is making great headway towards educating producers and the public about dissolved phosphorus.

Ohio EPA

Russ Gibson reported that the Harmful Algal Bloom office has been moved from the Division of Surface Water to the Division of Drinking and Ground Waters. Ohio EPA has been working on the Western Lake Erie Collaborative Implementation Planning. Gibson reported that the inland lakes monitoring plans for 2016 are being finalized.

ODA

Kevin Elder reported that a meeting was held with Ohio EPA, ODA-DLEP and DSWC to discuss how complaints are handled and tracked. Elder reported that over 10,000 individuals have received certification through ODA's Fertilizer Certification Program. ODA continues avian influenza outreach and monitoring.

FSA

Brandi Koehler reported on behalf of FSA. Koehler provided a written report . Koehler reported the nationwide CRP cap of 24 million acres.

NRCS

Ta Trecia Davis reported on behalf of USDA-NRCS. Davis provided an update on agency programs and current signups. Three hundred eight new CSP applications received were eligible and pending approval and 28 CSP applications for renewal were received. Approximately 2500 EQIP applications were received. Ranking and obligations will be complete by mid-June. USDA is now accepting proposals for fiscal year 2017 RCPP funding. Pre-proposals are due May 10 and \$260 million are available for state-wide projects. One new state RCPP grant was funded for Clear Creek Watershed in the amount of \$425,000. Highland SWCD is the lead partner.

Davis also stated USDA announced a new WLEB Initiative during a press conference on March 28. Also announced at that time was the newly released Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) report. According to the report, this (WLEB) Initiative will help landowners reduce phosphorus runoff from farms by more than 640,000 pounds each year and reduce sediment loss by over 260,000 tons over the course of the three-year \$77 million investment (\$41 million national contribution, \$36 million states contribution).

Davis shared information about a press conference today in Findlay at which USDA-NRCS and Farm Bureau have entered into an agreement to identify and develop model Discovery Farms to promote and demonstrate best management practices in the WLEB. They have contracted with three farms in Hancock and Hardin Counties – Stateler Family Farms, Kurt Farms, and Kellogg farms.

On January 15, 2016, Secretary Vilsack announced the inclusion of 11 Ohio counties into the Department's StrikeForce program including Adams, Athens, Fayette, Guernsey, Jackson, Lucas, Meigs, Morgan, Pike, Scioto, and Vinton. USDA's StrikeForce delivers promising, sustainable results by building partnerships with community organizations, businesses, foundations, universities, faith-based, and other groups to help challenged communities shape a future based on local assets and regional strengths.

OFSWCD

Mindy Bankey reported that OFSWCD President Kris Swartz was unable to attend the OSWCC meeting as he was representing OFSWCD at the NRCS/Farm Bureau Blanchard River Demonstration Farms Announcement in Findlay. Bankey reported that Summer Supervisor School schedule will be out next week. OFSWCD is working with NACD and NRCS on training new employees on conservation planning.

Adjourn

Bill Tom moved to adjourn. Larry Vance seconded.

Chairman Price adjourned the meeting at 12:48 p.m.