

Chapter 1 – OHIO SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

OHIO SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION HISTORY

The information contained in this section of the SWCD Administrative Handbook has been included in an effort to educate the reader/user on the early history of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Ohio, as well as the history of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Division of Soil and Water Conservation (DSWC).

The information contained herein up to the 1980s is selected text which has been excerpted from an existing document entitled "DIVISION OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS", written by Floyd E. Heft. For those desiring a more inclusive account of this time period in its entirety, it is suggested that the original document be reviewed.

We would like to express our sincere thanks and deepest appreciation to former DSWC Chief Larry Vance, DSWR Chief David Hanselmann, and former DSWC Deputy Chief, Brad Ross for their contribution of historical content and review of the sections 1980 through 2012.

[OHIO SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS BY ORDER OF OFFICIAL ORGANIZATION](#)

THE FLEDGLING THIRTIES

The first governmental recognition of soil erosion in our nation was marked by the Buchanan Amendment to the Agriculture Appropriation Bill enacted by the United States Congress in 1929. The appropriation of \$160,000 to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for erosion investigation signaled the beginning of today's soil and water conservation programs not only in the United States but also for many other countries.

On May 12, 1934, the worst dust storm in the nation's history swept eastward from the Great Plains to the Atlantic Ocean, obscuring the sun and depositing obvious films of dust as it moved. This catastrophic storm served as the catalyst for public outcry and congressional action for soil and water conservation throughout the nation. On April 27, 1935, Congress passed and President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Soil Conservation Act of 1935, Public Law No. 46. The act established the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) within USDA.

Failed Federal Presence

Until 1937, all the new soil and water conservation thrust had originated with the federal government working directly with landowners, primarily farmers. Farmers previously had little direct contact with USDA and they were very skeptical of federal involvement. Hugh H. Bennett, Chief of SCS; M.L. Wilson, Director of the Federal Cooperative Extension Service; and Phil Glick, legal counsel in USDA recognized the fragility inherent in this direct relationship between the federal government and local landowners. They realized that the future trust and long-term cooperation of landowners would depend upon a linkage of and involvement with federal, state, and local government. Because of their efforts, Congress passed a resolution which the President signed, calling for states to become the conduit for soil and water conservation assistance from USDA to land users through enactment of a law establishing a state soil conservation agency and procedures whereby local soil and water conservation districts could be organized. By the end of

1937, 22 states had enacted such a law, but Ohio's attempt to secure enactment in 1939 failed because of reluctant support of agricultural leadership in the state.

The decade of the 1930s, nevertheless, through federal action gave meaning and visibility to soil and water conservation. The rapid-fire passage of other laws created several federal agricultural agencies new to rural America and not all proved acceptable. The Agricultural Adjustment Act was declared unconstitutional because of direct payments to farmers. Congress hastily amended the Act to create the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) of USDA which was viewed as constitutional because of the conservation designation and cost-sharing of payments for conservation practices. (This agency is now known as the Farm Service Agency)

THE FORMATIVE FORTIES

As the decade of the 1940s began, world conflicts were bringing our nation closer to war each passing month and intense pressures were developing on farmers to increase food production on the land they managed. The 94th Ohio General Assembly retained soil conservation on its agenda, and on May 16, 1941, passed House Bill 646, which became the Ohio Soil Conservation District Enabling Act when it was signed by Governor John W. Bricker on June 5, 1941. This act created the Ohio Soil Conservation Committee (OSCC) as an agency of the State of Ohio with offices at The Ohio State University. The Act also established procedures for the formation of local Soil Conservation Districts and the election of local District Boards of Supervisors in addition to defining the authorities and responsibilities of these local district boards and OSCC. The roots of the Division of Soil and Water Districts trace directly to this legislation.

Local Referendum

Procedures for the formation of a local Soil Conservation District required that a petition requesting a hearing and containing signatures of a least 75 landowners within the proposed district be submitted to OSCC. Then OSCC would conduct a public hearing concerning possible formation of the District. Testimony at the hearing provided information which assisted OSCC to determine the sufficiency of need for the district. A favorable decision resulted in OSCC authorizing the local petitioners to conduct a local referendum for or against the proposed district. Both OSCC hearings and the local referendum were advertised by legal notices in the local newspapers. The description of the district's boundaries, name of the District, hearing and referendum dates, and balloting locations and times were required in the referendum legal notice. Landowners within the proposed district were eligible to vote. No referendum was ever challenged on the basis of this procedure. Results of the local referendum were tallied and certified to OSCC for review and action declaring the district organized if 65 percent of those voting favored establishment of the proposed District. Why the law required a 65 percent majority vote was never clarified, but the favorable vote in all but a few Districts exceeded 85 percent. This overwhelming support indicated that local people were dedicated to the cause of soil conservation and spoke emphatically at the polls when given the opportunity.

Administration of an organized district and its program was provided in the Act by requiring the election of a District Board of Supervisors consisting of five members, not necessarily farmers or landowners. The law stated that no Supervisor shall receive compensation for services but may be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the discharge of official duties. Upon submission to OSCC of petitions nominating candidates for Supervisors signed by 25 landowners within the district, OSCC conducted an election of Supervisors. OSCC upon receipt of election results

declared a District functional and transmitted to the Ohio Secretary of State a copy of its finding and decree incorporating the district and a list of Supervisors of the District. The district thereupon became a political subdivision of the State of Ohio.

Commission, Federation Forge the Future

A new era of soil conservation leadership erupted March 25, 1942, when OSCC met for the first time. Its membership included OSU Dean of Agriculture John F. Cunningham, ODA Director Robert Brown, Harry Silcott of Fayette County, Cosmos D. Blubaugh of Knox County, and John Grierson of Highland County. Dean Cunningham was elected the first chair. Six petitions for the formation of local districts were presented, and OSCC conducted official hearings on petitions from Clark, Highland and Columbiana Counties and recognized receipt of petitions from Butler, Morrow and Coshocton Counties. Practically all districts in Ohio were organized by county boundaries and carried the county name as recommended by local petitioners. Although the first hearing was for the Clark Soil Conservation District, the Highland District sponsors conducted their election of Supervisors sooner after their hearing and thereby were officially designated district No. 1 in Ohio. Many legal and procedural issues soon developed, and OSCC, with no staff was nearly overwhelmed with organizational problems. Dean Cunningham spent much time interpreting the law and setting procedures with the help of the Ohio Attorney General. He retired in 1947, and his successor, Dean Leo L. Rummell, was also elected Chair of OSCC.

A landmark event occurred on October 20, 1943, when the Ohio Federation of Soil Conservation District Supervisors was established with three districts participating - Clark, Butler and Highland. This embryonic organization was destined beyond all expectation to become the most influential and respected force for land and water conservation and management in Ohio. Interested nonagricultural groups almost instantly gave support to the Federation. Trent Sicles, Manager of the Great Southern Hotel and Public Relations Vice President of Lazarus Department Stores in Columbus, sponsored a statewide meeting of district supervisors on December 17, 1943, at the Southern Hotel.

The Federation's first annual meeting was also held at the Southern Hotel in February 1944 with 19 organized Districts (and 18 in the process of organizing) in attendance. Allen Craig of the Clark District was elected President and continued to serve in that capacity until 1947 at which time Clay Stackhouse of the Huron District served as President until 1950. Both gave excellent leadership during the formative and critical stages of Soil Conservation District development in Ohio and the United States.

MOUs Established

Districts upon formation were encouraged to enter into agreements with USDA and SCS whereby technical conservation assistance could be provided through districts to cooperating landowners. Basically, the district was to provide office space and operational costs for the federal technicians. Because districts did not receive financial assistance from the state or local government, they could not provide such assistance and accepted the offer from SCS not only to provide facilities for its own employees but also to allow its office to be used as the district's office. This arrangement created an image problem for districts because all office identification was federal and telephones were answered as such. News stories were seldom credited to the district and all field equipment was federally labeled. It was no small wonder that farmers and the public usually considered the district a federal agency run by SCS.

Regardless, the districts appreciated their autonomy and guarded it very effectively. An unsuccessful challenge to this autonomy developed in 1944 when a bill was introduced into the Ohio General Assembly to place all conservation agencies into a single department of State government. Supervisors adamantly rejected the concept because they viewed entrance into the partisan political setting as detrimental to their local acceptance. A second challenge developed in 1948 when bills were introduced into Congress to place SCS under the federal Cooperative Extension Service. Districts throughout the nation objected strenuously and the legislation did not pass. Districts continued to oppose becoming a part of a state department and when in 1949 the Ohio Department of Natural Resources was created by Amended Senate Bill 13, districts and OSCC were not included.

THE BREAKTHROUGH FIFTIES

The soil conservation movement in Ohio experienced landmark success in the 1950s. The long-sought State funding appropriation to OSCC was approved in 1950 and staff was hired to assist districts. The enactment of Ohio House Bill 116 in 1951 authorized county commissioners to appropriate local funds to districts and the state to match such appropriations. It also provided funds for OSCC to hire an Executive Secretary. Floyd E. Heft was named to this position in 1951 and was immediately engaged as Treasurer for the National Association of Conservation Districts Annual (NACD) Convention held in Cleveland in 1952.

In 1952, Congress again proposed to place SCS under the federal Cooperative Extension Service over strong district objection. Districts won the battle, but SCS structure was changed to eliminate all regional offices thus linking Washington, D.C. directly to the states. Hugh Bennett retired as Chief of SCS and an Ohio agronomist, Dr. Robert Salter, was named successor. The United States Secretary of Agriculture issued Memorandum 1278 giving SCS technical approval responsibility for design and construction of conservation practices receiving cost-share funding from ASCS. Districts viewed this action as diluting SCS technical services assigned to districts and objected, but the memorandum prevailed. This policy actually benefited districts because it provided services to many non-cooperating farmers and technically sound practices were installed within the district with or without a conservation plan.

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act

The year 1954 may truly be called a "watershed year" for conservation. Congress passed Public Law 83-566, the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, authorizing and funding SCS planning and construction of facilities and features within a hydrological unit (watershed) not to exceed 250,000 acres in size. The Act was opposed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers because of that agency's position that flood prevention could not be cost effective under the small watershed concept, and the "big dam-little dam" battle of the early 1950s was launched. Congress in 1953 had authorized two pilot projects in Ohio, the Upper Hocking in Fairfield District and the Rocky Fork in Highland District. These projects, in addition to others nationally, were to provide evidence for or against establishment of a major, permanent, small watershed program. Interestingly, Congress was impatient and moved the following year to make the "Watershed" program permanent and began major funding as pilot watershed-planning was just getting under way. Governor Frank J. Lausche designated ODNR as the "Small Watershed" coordinating agency for Ohio. Conservation education grew rapidly in the 1950s. Major new and expanded activities included educational programs, publications, expanded training schools for district supervisors, new educational format for Ohio 4-H Conservation Camp, soil stewardship materials for churches, air

tours to view conservation practices, co-sponsorship of world conservation expositions and plowing matches in Adams District, Queen of the Furrow Contest and a graduate course in conservation for professionals.

The Ohio Federation in the 1950s profited from good leadership and five outstanding presidents:

James Lane (1950-1951), a fruit farmer of Greene District;

Orran Hofstetter (1952-1953) of Wayne District, a natural salesperson and promoter;

Frank Sollars (1954-1955) of Fayette District, the youngest President and an innovative farmer;

Robert Grieser (1956-1957) of Clark District, a farmer and excellent community and state leader;

Sam Studebaker (1958-1959) of Miami District, farmer, a molder of unity and first Ohio President of the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Robert Grieser's and Sam Studebaker's induction into both the Ohio Conservation and Agriculture Halls of Fame and Frank Sollars' induction into the Ohio Agriculture Hall of Fame are indicative of their leadership qualities. Districts and the Ohio Federation came of age in the 1950's. Both were successful in legislative endeavors and initiating district identity with their state legislators through a very successful annual legislative breakfast, the first of which was held in 1959. They had laid the cornerstones for the building of the future.

Structural and organizational changes of OSCC during the 1950s expanded the Committee to seven members to include the ODNR Director and an additional farmer. Herbert Eagon, prior to his appointment as ODNR Director, was appointed farmer member and ODNR Director Marion became a new member. The Ohio State University representative to OSCC, Dean L.L. Rummell, retired and Dr. Roy M. Kottman replaced him. Herbert Eagon became ODNR Director in 1957 and resigned from the Committee as farmer member. SCS leadership changed in 1959 as the first State Conservationist for Ohio, Thomas Kennard, retired and Raymond Brown succeeded him. Brown, an engineer by training, was given a strong mandate by SCS Chief Williams to get the Public Law 83-566 Watershed program moving in Ohio. Gene Derickson was hired in 1959 as the second full-time OSCC staff member and was given responsibility for statewide program development.

THE SENSATIONAL SIXTIES

The role of the soil conservation movement in Ohio in the 1960s moved from an almost total orientation of agricultural soil conservation to one involving soil and water conservation with a much-expanded segment of citizens' interests. The capabilities of Districts to service water conservation needs fully were challenged constantly by legal restraints of the law governing them.

Program expansion suffered because of the structural position of the OSCC within State government. The SCS expansionist philosophy, in view of a shrinking agricultural clientele, brought pressures to include new programs serving nonagricultural interests. Districts by receiving and expending public funds came under scrutiny of state auditors. Many operational changes during the 1960s were attained only after testy debates and greater scrutiny than in any previous time. Watershed activities and applications soared with great rapidity. By 1964, 53 watershed applications were submitted of which six were being planned and eight approved for planning.

The explosion of watershed applications in Ohio caused many problems. The planning capability of SCS was swamped and generated a need for establishing a dual planning priority system by ODNR to prevent SCS from giving priority to the Maumee River basin applications over other applications from other areas of the state. Processing of applications took so long that local interests subsided and, in some cases, disappeared or became a testy force of disenchantment and bickering criticism. SCS argued that extra planning money could be secured only by flooding Congress with watershed applications and local pressure for planning assistance. Ohio was unable to provide funds to SCS for additional watershed planning staff, and federal construction funds were so inadequate that completion of projects required decades, not years as promised.

Naming Becomes Issue

Ohio's districts, OSCC and the Federation secured legislation to provide for their voluntary name change to include water to represent better their major natural resources areas of service. Within two years, all local districts changed their names to include water; for example, the Jackson Soil Conservation District changed its name to the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District. Such name changes are certified with the Ohio Secretary of State. OSCC's name was changed to the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Committee (SWCD), and the Federation changed its name to the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (OFSWCD).

Because of their extensive tree-planting activities and forest management interests, districts had frequently encouraged expansion of the forestry program at OSU. Neither OSU nor any other school in Ohio had an accredited forestry program and Ohio students desiring to obtain a degree in forestry were obliged to leave Ohio to find such a program. For many years, resolutions to enlarge the forestry program at OSU had been passed by districts and forwarded to the university but few tangible results developed. Eventually, the federation prompted by the Athens district, passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a School of Forestry at Ohio University in Athens. Administrators at OSU were quick to understand that message and moved immediately to address the districts' major concerns. An agreement was negotiated with Michigan State University whereby Ohio students could obtain a forestry degree at Michigan State with OSU paying the additional out-of-state fees. Shortly thereafter, OSU added additional forestry faculty which led to the establishment of degree programs in Forest Industry Management and Forest Products Management. Districts had accomplished a significant long-term improvement not only for their own interests but for others as well.

Soil erosion in and about incorporated areas resulting from exploding residential and other urban and suburban development became a concern. Because of the impacts of such erosion on drainage channels, storm sewers and water supply reservoirs, many incorporated areas became a part of districts by petition. Cooperation between districts and incorporated areas led to such programs as evaluation of a soils capability to support industrial building and various housing structures; downstream impact of accelerated water flow from housing, industrial and shopping center sites; and the possibility of multiple-purpose structures for water impoundment, retardation, sediment control and recreational facilities at a given site within an urban-growth area.

Multiflora rose generated so much landowner concern because of its spreading and difficulty of control that Districts pursued passage of legislation designating it as a noxious weed and prohibiting its propagation in Ohio. Objection to the rose became intense and eradication so expensive, ASCS

developed cost-share funding for its control, a total reversal of the cost-sharing practice for the original establishment of rose plantings in the 1940s and early 1950s.

Senate Bill 160

Major legislation, Ohio Senate bill 160, was passed by the Ohio General Assembly in 1969. It replaced the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Committee by creating the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission (OSWCC) and the Division of Soil and Water Districts in the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Districts and OSCC, with support of other farm organizations, ODA and ODNR, provided the major thrust in enactment of Senate Bill 160. There were five compelling reasons for districts to switch their long-standing position of opposing a merger into any department of state government:

- 1) Greater state financial involvement in watershed projects was essential in light of experiences in the Chippewa and Buffalo Creek Watersheds.
- 2) Districts, to secure the amounts of money required for watershed projects and other District programs needed an organizational connection with a department of state government having cabinet status.
- 3) Districts and OSCC had gained public and legislative respect sufficient to request and attain their desired status and authorities within a major department of state government.
- 4) Although recognizing the greatly expanded partisan political influence in ODNR since 1963, districts had developed sufficient political clout in soil and water conservation affairs either to prevent or alter significantly any future politically motivated administrative directives.
- 5) District programs could serve better local needs if districts possessed the ability to communicate directly through state administrative channels.

The Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Committee, by motion made by ODA Director John Stackhouse, seconded by Dean Kottman, unanimously approved merging into ODNR. Chair Harle Hicks appointed a committee to draft the necessary legislation bringing about the merger and containing certain provisions necessary for the Committee's support. Districts gave their tentative support contingent upon approval of the finally drafted legislation. Essential provisions for support of the Districts were as follows:

- The Committee be made a Commission, advisory to a newly created Division, and be given representative membership on the Recreation and Resources Commission functioning as advisory to the ODNR Director.
- The Commission to consist of seven members: Dean of OSU College of Agriculture, ODA Director, four members appointed by the Governor of which not more than two shall be from the same major political party, and a member appointed by resolution of the Federation; the ODNR Director to be an advisory member.
- The Commission would retain authority to distribute state matching funds to districts, to supervise elections in local districts, to make loans for preliminary expenses necessary in planning watershed and other conservation works of improvements, to authorize creation of joint boards between districts, to recommend to the ODNR Director state cost share funds

for construction of watershed projects and conservation works of improvements, and to have the services of an Executive Secretary designated by ODNR.

All these provisions were included in Senate Bill 160; however, ODNR initially pursued a section status in the department rather than a divisional status. The Committee and districts disagreed and succeeded in securing divisional status. Senator Harry Armstrong of Logan was the prime sponsor of the bill and insisted upon divisional status. Armstrong, a past District Supervisor, Treasurer of the Ohio Federation, Hocking County Commissioner and State Representative, had misgivings about the merger. He feared injection of partisan politics into the soil and water conservation arena. Districts, OSWCC and staff experienced some degree of skepticism in autumn of 1969 when the physical move and organizational move into ODNR were accomplished. Floyd Heft was appointed Chief of the newly created Division of Soil and Water Districts and Executive Secretary of OSWCC.

After enactment of Senate Bill 160 in 1969, the newly established Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission (OSWCC) elected David Urmston of Butler District as its first Chair. Other appointed members were Orran Hofstetter of Wayne District, Robert Grieser of Clark District and Donald Leith of Fairfield District. Jay Skinner of Delaware District was the first appointed member by resolution of the Federation.

Expansion of programs and services included in Senate Bill 160 has provided more opportunities for natural resources management at the local District level every year since its passage. The most significant was the provision for sponsorship and implementation of watershed projects and Conservation Works of Improvement (CWI) supported by a rotary loan fund and a cost-share fund to pay the costs of public benefits designed into a project. The provision for CWI in Senate Bill 160 was approved by the General Assembly to assist the Public Law 83-566 Watershed. This specific language provided for not only small watersheds but also for any other project that would enhance natural resource management. Recreation, forestry, wildlife, water supply, flood control and many other types of natural resource projects qualify under the present language. Districts have successfully used these provisions of Senate Bill 160 to solve local needs both rural and urban.

In 1968, the Committee hired Robert Goettemoeller as a third staff person and Floyd Heft served as the first President of the National Association of State Conservation Administrative Officers.

Excellent leadership prevailed in the Districts and the Federation in the 1960's:

Harle Hicks (1960-1961) of Putnam SWCD, successful grain farmer and cattle feeder;

Sam Frantz (1962-1963) of Franklin SWCD, an agricultural engineering graduate of OSU, a certified seed producer and a community leader;

Paul Stockman (1964) a grain farmer from Henry SWCD served only one year due to his untimely death by cancer;

Homer Bohl (1965-1966) of Highland SWCD, a good public speaker and producer of registered Jersey cattle, became President in 1965 to complete Stockman's term and again was elected in 1966;

Wayne Darr (1967-1968) of Coshocton SWCD, a successful cattle feeder;

Harold Dobbins (1969-1970) of Greene SWCD, a grain and livestock farmer.

THE RENAISSANCE SEVENTIES

The major environmental thrusts in the early 1970s culminated in the enactment of the federal Clean Water Act with immediate targeting of point sources of pollution from industrial and municipal polluters. These were not easy targets but they were manageable targets. Districts, the commission and the division were analyzing these actions in anticipation of future legislative thrusts and they ultimately established five basic positions:

- 1) Nonpoint source pollutants would not go unidentified and would involve pollutants primarily from farms and other land-disturbing activities.
- 2) Although not desiring regulatory responsibilities, districts were the logical administrative structure to deal with pollution from agricultural operations and other land-disturbing activities.
- 3) Districts possessed the capability and knowledge of working with agriculture and its complex uncontrollable aspects. The division was well-positioned within ODNR to enable development of a broadly based resources management program coordinated locally through Districts to land users.
- 4) Due to the nature and complexities of the reasonable control of nonpoint pollutants, the major point of attack must be by a local governmental unit; and if districts did not accept the responsibility, another existing or newly created local unit of government would.
- 5) Many of the conceivable pollution control practices and structures that may be required were synonymous with present-day conservation practices.

These conservation groups, agricultural organizations and State and federal agencies agreed that it behooved Soil and Water Conservation Districts to take the initiative for developing a nonpoint source pollution abatement program for Ohio. Action prior to any major environmental thrust was appropriate because such sensitive programs can best be developed outside an emotionally charged, emergency oriented atmosphere. Ohio Senate Bill 305 was enacted in 1971 giving responsibility to the Division of Soil and Water Districts and two technical advisory boards named by the division for the development of an agricultural pollution abatement and urban sediment pollution abatement program. Districts, OSWCC and the division after three years of frustration, criticism and defensive tactics surrounding the "channelization" issue had regained a favorable public image and were again on the offensive in their pursuit of wise natural resource management.

District and Division Staff Expand

Another major initiative began in 1970. Districts were finding that their programs had matured and their staffs had grown to the degree that more management assistance at the district program level was needed. Executive Secretaries for districts were viewed as a way to provide more program direction by the supervisors, delegating day-to-day staff and program details to be handled by the Executive Secretary. Several districts had developed broadly based agricultural and urban assistance programs that extended beyond the scope of traditional SCS and OCES programs, and those districts needed to develop and manage employees and programs accordingly.

The division also responded by initiating a program specialist project through which district program development and administrative assistance could be coordinated at a regional level. Larry Vance

filled the first of eventually ten positions to serve this need. Vance became the fourth division staff member in 1970.

A change of state administration and political party control in January 1971 brought many new philosophies and pursuits into ODNR with the appointment of Director William B. Nye. The division and districts received extensive support from Nye's administration in the form of a large increase in state matching funds for districts and division staff expansion. Three staff positions were funded to assist Robert Goettemoeller, the newly designated pollution abatement coordinator and three new field program specialist positions were established.

After more than two years of research, debate and strategy considerations, the Agricultural Nonpoint Pollution Abatement Program was approved by OSWCC and Director Nye. Recommendations centered around four types of potential pollutants: agricultural erosion, agricultural chemicals, animal wastes and air pollution. Strategies included the following: 1) an economic fairness strategy, 2) a fair enforcement procedure emphasizing local review and peer evaluation, 3) a public complaint procedure, 4) an educational and informational initiative, 5) a technical assistance service and 6) a cost-share strategy.

The Urban Sediment Pollution Abatement Program was completed and submitted to OSWCC for review and recommendation a few months later. It encountered more debate regarding strategies of approach, content and implementation due to involvement of realtors, builders, townships, counties and incorporated municipalities. Concerns focused on impingement upon municipal "home rule" doctrines of law, burdening the construction industry with additional permit delays and requirements and extensive costs of applying corrective measures. Strategies included the following: 1) an implementation and enforcement strategy, 2) a suggestion that the original permit for construction be issued by local units of government, 3) an assurance that there would be no interference or involvement by state government should local units enact and enforce ordinances, and 4) a model ordinance to be prepared by the division with an illustrated publication.

The mid-1970s brought emphasis upon nonpoint source pollutants as the federal Clean Water Act required a "208 Plan" for all pollution abatement efforts to attain fishable, swimmable waters by 1985. Guidelines of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) for acceptable 208 Plans required inclusion of a nonpoint source pollution abatement strategy containing enforcement capability for attainment of clean water goals. The Agricultural and Urban Sediment Pollution Abatement Program then being developed by the division, fit these requirements perfectly, and required legislative enactment of the necessary authorization. Both programs were approved by OSWCC, Director Nye and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Director Ira Whitman.

Another change of state administration and political party control in January 1975 resulted in the appointment of a new ODNR Director, Robert W. Teater and a new OEPA Director, Ned E. Williams, both of whom were supportive of the non-point programs and the need for legislation. In spite of strong opposition from ODA Director John Stackhouse, who was also a member of OSWCC, legislation was introduced in 1977 by Representative Fred Deering, a farmer from Monroeville, well-acquainted with districts and the division. After much debate and numerous revisions, a weakened bill was enacted in 1978. Rules for Ohio's nonpoint source pollution abatement programs were adopted and the cost-share provisions put into operation with limited funds starting in 1980.

Programs Soar

The 1970s produced many other legislative and conservation political activities. The Ohio Soil Conservation District law was amended to place all lands in a county into the existing soil and water conservation district and to grant all owners and occupiers the right to vote in electing district supervisors. The Ohio Drainage laws were amended to modernize antiquated, cumbersome and procedural conflicts. Districts and OSWCC strongly supported "Bottle Bill" legislation in an effort to control throw-away containers to reduce litter, because throw-away cans and bottles were proving quite hazardous to farm equipment operations, livestock, and human safety.

Operationally, the districts, division and OSWCC experienced several challenges and a gradual shift to less federal assistance and greater State and local assistance with similar program activity shifts.

In regard to technical capabilities, the division, districts and OSWCC established an unprecedented level of acceptance and performance in the 1970s. A significant dialogue with USEPA regarding animal waste regulations and the issuance of permits and monitoring of tile drain outlets gained excellent results. The idea of issuance of permits for tile outlets was eliminated as totally impractical and nearly impossible. Animal waste regulations were adopted which practically paralleled the Ohio regulation and implementation strategy.

Conservation tillage, although meaning different things to different farmers, gained a significant place in conservation technology and application during the 1970's. The range in definition included the elimination of one seedbed preparation operation over the land to no land disturbance at all, commonly termed "no-till". Conservation tillage by any definition served to reduce land compaction, erosion, water runoff, and the exposure of the soil to rainfall through the retention of surface biomass, commonly known as surface mulch. No-till was the ultimate in almost eliminating soil erosion and maximizing infiltration and percolation of rainfall. Research and use proved no-till to be equal or better in more ways than any previously recommended conservation practice. The practice requires less labor, lower fuel costs, equipment investment, and tractor horsepower and less pre-planting preparation. It does, however, require the use of more chemicals, a more expensive planter and sharper management skills.

Even with all the benefits, farmers were reluctant to adopt this "radical change in the way they farmed" until they had practical hands-on experience. Districts worked to resolve this limitation through no-till demonstrations and farmer-field trial programs. Districts proceeded to purchase, rent, or lease no-till equipment from the various local implement dealers for use by several interested farmers on a small acreage of one, two, or three years. Usually, this learning experience was enough for the farmer to adopt the practice.

All forms of conservation tillage were given extensive recognition as one of the primary practices needed to reduce nonpoint source pollutants coming from agricultural operations. The Seneca, Huron and Crawford Districts formed a Joint Board of Supervisors and entered into a three-year cooperative agreement with the Corps of Engineers to measure and evaluate the pollution abatement and economic impacts of no-till farming and the farmers' acceptance attitudes within the Honey Creek Watershed. The project also gave added information to Dr. David Baker of Heidelberg College who was conducting research on nonpoint source pollution under USEPA grants. Perhaps of all soil erosion control alternatives, conservation tillage saved more soil through

residue management than all the engineering and structural practices installed since the inception of the program.

Districts were very successful in securing appropriations from local boards of county commissioners for expediting local soil inventory programs by counties. These additional funds were meshed with federal funds from SCS and state funds from the Division of Lands and Soil. By the end of the 1970s, all but two counties had been completely mapped or were in the process of being mapped.

Administratively, districts reached a realistic stage of maturity in the 1970s when many found it necessary to hire administrative assistants and more technical assistance. Districts by the end of the 1970's were employing approximately 300 such persons due to public demand for their programs. Robert Quilliam, State Conservationist of SCS, retired in 1979 after giving Ohio ten years of outstanding leadership.

The 1970s demonstrated that the merger into ODNR was the right decision because soil and water conservation programs of Ohio and local Districts flourished. Benefits were as predicted, although unexpected challenges surfaced and were satisfactorily resolved.

Soil and water conservation in Ohio through the 1970s was guided by five outstanding Presidents:

Mason McConnell (1971-1972), a Portage SWCD fruit grower;

Calvin Kiracofe (1973-1974), an Allen SWCD grain farmer and cattle feeder;

Clarence Durban (1975-1976), a Union SWCD grain farmer and former dairyman and Ohio's second President of the National Association of Conservation Districts;

Arthur Brandt (1977-1978), a Darke SWCD grain and livestock farmer; and

Wilbur Gantz (1979-1980), a Franklin SWCD dairy farmer.

Soil and water conservation educational efforts of previous decades with assistance from the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service were continued with the addition of conservation tillage, pollution abatement and the division's leadership in establishing training activities for district technicians, secretaries, and administrative personnel. The division staff and staff of the OSU Department of Agricultural Education jointly developed a soil and water conservation teaching outline for use by vocational agriculture teachers of Ohio. The 1970s with the expanded conservation programs and challenges shall always be identified with strong, capable and consistent leadership within the soil and water conservation spectrum providing a legacy of performance laced with opportunities to determine long-term program direction and expanded public service.

EXPANSIVE EIGHTIES

The momentum of the 1970s was sustained with vigor throughout the 1980s. Pollution abatement continued as a priority with HB 655 giving the chief of the division the power to issue administrative orders, also known as chief's orders, to producers of operations with less than 1000 animal units for which valid pollution complaints had been received and continued unresolved. Also in 1980, legislation was passed to include all lands, both unincorporated and incorporated, within the SWCD boundaries. In 1981, USEPA granted funds to 20 Lake Erie Basin SWCDs to accelerate the adoption of no-till farming. Included were funds for the purchase of no-till planters for producers to use to trial the practice as well as funds to hire technicians to assist with implementation.

With SWCDs now in the forefront of pollution abatement, growth began to happen on the organizational and financial side of the equation. In 1982, legislation was approved merging the Division of Lands and Soils with the Resources Analysis section of the Division of Water forming the new Division of Soil and Water Conservation (DSWC).

Also in that year the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts began its Ohio Conservation Fund initiative to raise the level of state match dollars going to SWCDs to match the ever-increasing workload. At that time state match of local appropriations was about 41%. Out of 19 different funding sources identified, two proposals were vetted seriously: a tax on carry out food or dedicated general revenue funds. The OFSWCD chose to pursue the increase in general revenue funds at the 1 to 1 rate allowed by law. Heavy pressure was placed on seated governors and gubernatorial candidates to commit to this funding level for SWCDs.

In successive biennium's, 1984 through 1987 state match was increased at least 600,000 dollars in each biennium taking total match dollars from 1.08 million dollars to 3.05 million dollars and producing an 80% match rate on local appropriations by decades end.

In 1985, oil and gas development of the Clinton sandstone precipitated assistance to the ODNR Division of Oil and Gas on well site restoration issues in both rural and urban areas. Also, the multiflora rose eradication cost-share program was begun.

Food Security Act of 1985

However, the most influential event of the decade was the passage and implementation of the 1985 Farm Bill also known as the Food Security Act of 1985. No other piece of federal legislation, since the Standard State District Act would have so much direct influence on the nature of soil and water conservation practices in Ohio and the relationship among the conservation delivery partners. This act redefined the SCS approach from field assistance to planning and monitoring. Highlights from the act included targeting funding and cross compliance; Sod Buster and Swamp Buster provisions, Conservation Reserve program, and called for management plans on all Highly Erodible Lands (HEL) to be developed by 1990 and implemented by 1995.

Rounding out the decade were several other program and legislative changes that continue to influence SWCD operations today:

- 1987 – Federal Clean Water Act Amendments:
 - Infuse hundreds of millions of dollars into the Great Lakes and create the Great Lakes Nation Program Office and Great Lakes Research Office;
 - Initiates the targeted watershed approach water quality improvements;
 - Establishes the national estuary reserve designation;
 - Sets in motion the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) permitting program and
 - Created the “319” grant program, a national program to control nonpoint source pollution under Section 319 of the act.
- 1987 – Chapter 1515 is amended to allow for municipal appropriations to SWCDs
- 1988 – Envirothon competition is introduced in Ohio
- 1989 – The Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission approved funding for the Division to provide grants to SWCDs for thirteen Manure Nutrient Management Specialists.

Outstanding OFSWCD leadership prevailed in the 1980s:

James Vines (1981-82), an Ashland SWCD dairy farmer

Robert Pitts (1983-1984), a Lorain SWCD grain farmer

Albert Ashbrook (1985-1986), a Licking SWCD grain farmer

Nevin Smith (1987-1988), a Logan SWCD beef cattle and grain farmer

Lynn Meyer (1989-1990), a Butler SWCD grain farmer and golf course owner

NEVER SAY NEVER NINETIES

As the millennium winded down, SWCDs in Ohio were just reaching their peak in terms of authority, funding and control of their own destiny. At the end of the decade match rates skyrocketed to 91% with 6.78 million dollars of state funds allocated to SWCDs – a 3.7 million dollar gain in only 8 years.

This feat was matched only by the passage of HB88 legislation in 1991 granting enforcement authority to the DSWC for Agriculture Pollution Abatement Standards including animal waste and agricultural and silvicultural sediment. The DSWC soon delegated this authority to the individual SWCDs via memos of understanding with the intent to foster keeping local problems local and reinforcing the long-held ethic of voluntary compliance.

Scrutiny of USDA programs by the media and members of Congress along with new programs and policy in conservation title of the 1985 and subsequent Farm Bills led to many changes by SCS in the 1990s and its relationship with SWCDs. In 1994, USDA changed the name of SCS to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to reflect the broadening of their scope and mission. Thirteen NRCS field offices in Ohio were closed by Congress in 1994 amid accusations of bloated USDA budgets and under used USDA offices. This left many SWCDs which had enjoyed shared office equipment, shared office space, shared telephone and shared employees, to now operate independently.

The closing of the 13 NRCS field offices acted as wakeup call and set in motion a new paradigm for the delivery of conservation programs and services. These changes also prompted a change in the DSWC's policy in supporting SWCDs. Once tuned to enabling SWCDs by expanding capacity with public funds and legislation authority; providing supervisor responsibility training and individualized staff training; and providing leadership in coordination with partnering agencies and organizations, the DSWC began to rethink its role. What evolved was a policy not to enable or direct SWCDs but to provide tools to SWCDs boards to exercise local self-government as independent political subdivisions of the state of Ohio. The new goal was to assist them in the credible and efficient delivery conservation programs that meet their local needs determined by local strategic planning. The Cooperative Working Agreement among the SWCDs, NRCS and the DSWC was also revised during this time to better reflect the separation of programs, policy and supervision of staff.

OSWCC, DSWC Support SWCD Transition

In response to the office closings, the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission set aside dollars for closed offices to assist with short term needs of paying for office space, purchasing office equipment, telephone service and other operational requirements. For the long term, and instep with

its new philosophical approach to supporting independent SWCDs, the DSWC created and provided governance and leadership training to board members and District Program Administrator who were now being endorsed by the DSWC and Federation to lead the day to day operations of the SWCD. District Administrators, as they were suggested to be titled, were charged with implementing the mission and vision of the board of supervisors.

The commission and DSWC also assisted local SWCDs to address local natural resource concerns by encouraging and leading the SWCDs through strategic planning efforts to define their mission/vision/strengths and weaknesses/strategic goals. The commission also offered a variety of state grants and funding opportunities focused on various natural resource concerns that SWCDs could choose to participate in, while maintaining local decision-making and goal development.

Amid all the organizational changes, SWCD programs were still on a growth path. Among the significant programs underdevelopments were:

- 1993 – Stormwater management requirements of the Clean Water Act emerged as a growing suburban/urban issue and SWCDs began to assist local governments and developers;
- 1993 – The Conservation Reserve Program popularity peaked with a half million acres signed up for 10 year easements;
- 1994 – The DSWC added 3 new Program Specialist to the ranks and completing the goal of providing 2 Program Specialists to each of the 5 administrative areas;
- 1998 – The Division of Soil and Water Conservation and the Division of Wildlife began to partner to offer grants to SWCDs to employ Wildlife Specialists; and
- 1999 – The OSWCC and the DSWC partnered to provide funding to SWCDs to hire Urban Stormwater Specialists as the workload to assist local governments meet NPDES stormwater permit requirements increased.

Under this cadre of strong leadership, the decade and the century end with Ohio conservation efforts well-positioned:

Robert Rockwell (1991-1992), a Belmont SWCD orchardist

Ed Elliott (1993-1994), a Hardin SWCD grain and livestock farmer, restaurateur, and entrepreneur

Gary Mast (1995-1996), a Holmes SWCD dairy farmer and 3rd NACD president from Ohio.

Bob Carroll (1997-1998), a Fulton SWCD grain farmer

Steve Robinson (1999-2000), a Union SWCD grain farmer and excavation contractor and Ohio's 4th NACD president.

MILLENNIUM MARKS CONSERVATION MILESTONES

The push for more state match dollars continued into the 2000s. By 2001 both state and local funds were up and a record 98% match rate was attained with the 8.6 million state dollars. In just 16 years local dollars had increased by 6.3 million dollars and state dollars had increased by 7.59 million for a total increase of 13.89 million dollars of conservation funding.

A significant portion of the funding increase on the state side came in 2000 with successful funding of the Ohio Watershed Action Agenda. Under the Watershed Action Agenda, Ohio EPA, ODNR and OSU Extension jointly approached the state legislature and asked for funding to allow SWCD and watershed organizations to hire local watershed coordinators. The Division of Soil and Water Conservation received \$300,000 and OSU Extension sufficient funds for five watershed agent

positions to initiate the program in 2000. Together with \$400,000 annually from Ohio EPA's 319 program and \$100,000 annually from the ODNR Division of Mineral Resources Management, (and since 2002 \$80,000 from ODNR's Ohio Coastal Management Program), the grants allowed local units of governments, including SWCDs, and non-profit organizations to employ watershed coordinators to identify water quality impairments and work with the community to address the impairments. The program envisioned that local units of governments and concerned citizens would see the value of water resource protection and support the watershed program as the state funds declined. In 2000, 21 local units of governments and nonprofits received grants; in 2001, four were funded; and in 2002 six more projects joined the ranks.

At the turn of the century the Division also experienced growth, mostly out of necessity with the NRCS program priorities and budgets in constant flux. A full-time training coordinator was hired as well as a professional engineer for each of the 5 administrative areas to assist with farm bill program workload and the ever increasing urban stormwater management assistance to local governments.

In January 2002, 20-year Chief of the Division of Soil and Water Conservation, Larry Vance, retired. Division Administrator Jill Evans was named acting Chief by ODNR Director Sam Speck. In March, nineteen year plus, Assistant Chief, David Hanselmann, was named Chief.

Late in 2002, the Division established an advisory committee to recommend changes to the Agricultural Pollution Abatement Program. Changes adopted in 2003 included responding to all complaints – both written and oral – to determine if any rule violations or means for improvements could be determined. Other changes obligated the DSWC and SWCDs to follow through on observed pollution even without a complaint being filed; stronger outreach and training for integrator companies, and elimination of the preliminary Chief's Order step prior to a final order.

In 2003, the Division and its new staff of professional engineers initiated an extensive training program for the 175 plus SWCD technicians, and NRCS staff, with 5 levels for professional development. The Technician Development Program (TDP) quickly garnered attention from many other states wanting to improve technical training.

SWIMS Provides Accountability

Due to the rapid growth in funding and conservation programs during the past decade, it became increasingly clear that there potentially would be a need for better accountability of the public expenditures for soil and water conservation. For several years the DSWC had recognized the need for a tracking system to be able to show county and state officials, as well as the general public, where the investment in conservation was paying off. The Minnesota Bureau of Water and Soil Resources (BOWSR) had recently developed an information management system designed to track various state program participation by Minnesota Conservation Districts. The Division negotiated an agreement with the BOWSR and a private software developer to create a tracking system for use in Ohio.

From 2003 to 2004, SWCD and DSWC personnel painstakingly developed and defined the framework for the Soil and Water Information Management System (SWIMS) – a tool which provides SWCDs, as well as the DSWC with the ability to track all aspects of the SWCD program and activities, as well as personnel management. This tool provides the OFSWCD with needed information to show accountability to the state legislature, as well as other information.

USDA approved the ODNR, DSWC and partners' application to establish a 70,000 acre Scioto River Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) for the entire Scioto River watershed in October 2004. Sign-up was robust with over 90% of the enrollment goal met within the six-year plan, bringing over \$150 million of federal funds to the watershed over the life of the project.

By October 2005 a Division-led partnership advisory committee announced recommendations to improve the silvicultural (forestry) part of the Agricultural Pollution Abatement Program. Recommended changes included stronger BMP and complaint investigation/procedures training for SWCD staff and boards, better BMP training for loggers, greater recognition for loggers following BMP guidelines, and use of a Notice of Intent to Harvest sent to SWCDs prior to logging onset.

During 2006, USDA approved significant improvements to Ohio's first CREP project – for Lake Erie. Shorter contract period options were added and higher payment rates and new practices were also approved. The sign-up improved significantly, especially as “regular” CRP contracts expired.

Budgets Tighten; Division Merged, Renamed

After beginning on a high, the first decade of the 2000s was tainted by an economic downturn leading to a succession of budget cuts and staff reductions by most state agencies. The state matching funds account for SWCDs was always an area of concern, but with strong SWCD support, cuts were often minimized or even avoided. One dramatic episode unfolded when the new Governor announced significant cuts in January 2007 and just minutes before the package was made public SWCDs learned that the match account had been spared further cuts.

In March 2009, then ODNR Director Sean Logan announced plans to merge the Division of Soil and Water Conservation and the Division of Water, and place the Division of Recycling and Litter Prevention (DRLP) under the same administrative umbrella. David Hanselmann was named as Chief of the combined Division of Soil and Water Resources (DSWR) and the DRLP. Part of the rationale for the merger was to improve access of SWCDs and their constituents to the “water” and recycling programs at ODNR, and vice versa.

Ohio's conservation partnership embarked on discussions for adopting a set of strategic directions for the future in 2009. However, further declines in local and state budgets made the effort even more challenging. The partnership engaged Battelle Memorial Institute to survey stakeholders and develop recommendations. Battelle's recommendations were made public in January 2011, and among the options/recommendations was to reduce and consolidate Ohio's 88 SWCDs down to 22. Not all recommendations were immediately embraced.

Other highlights include:

- The OFSWCD took full control of its administrative tasks hiring its first administrative staff, including its first CEO, Brad Ross who had retired in 2005 as Deputy Chief of the ODNR-DSWC. Ross later joined the staff of the National Association of Conservation Districts and the OFSWCD then hired Mindy Bankey to serve as CEO - a well-seasoned legislative professional and well respected in her former post as one of ODNR's legislative liaisons;
- Successful agricultural nutrient trading programs in the Great Miami and Sugar Creek watersheds provide the impetus for expansion of nutrient trading across Ohio;

- The publication of the first annual Dam Safety Report (for 2009) occurred in March 2010, with copies sent to over 1300 dam owners in Ohio. More extensive training opportunities for dam owners were also initiated, along with joint DSWR and SWCD outreach efforts.
- A celebration was held in September 2010 by numerous partners to mark the milestone of enrolling over 100,000 acres in Ohio's three CREP projects – Lake Erie, Upper Big Walnut Creek, and Scioto River Watershed.
- At the end of the decade Ohio had endorsed over 50 watershed action plans covering nearly 1/3 of the state. With an \$8 million investment since 2000, watershed coordinators leveraged over \$80 million to implement watershed action plans. Program staff also developed innovative technologies for stream management allowing creeks and drainage ways to “provide” environmental services on-site, including nutrient and sediment removal, habitat, stable channels, and flooding mitigation.

Steadfast at the helm despite a sea of change were some of the OFSWCDs strongest leaders:

Dave Linkhart (2001-2002), a Greene SWCD grain and livestock farmer

Tom Reininger (2003-2004), a Hamilton SWCD equine operation owner

Kenny Riedlinger (2005-2006), a Wyandot SWCD grain farmer

Clark Sheets, Jr. (2007-2008), a Hocking SWCD grain farmer and truck operator

Lawrence Burdell (2009-2010), a Gallia SWCD grain and livestock farmer

2010s: A DECADE DEFINED BY DISTRESS

Poor water quality conditions at Grand Lake St. Mary (GLSM) in the summer and early fall 2010 significantly worsened and concentrations of harmful algal blooms (HABs) grew far above health standards. Concurrently, although at lower levels, HAB conditions were found at other Ohio lakes. Recreational use of GLSM ceased. The DSWR led intense and rapid discussions with stakeholders and by fall put forward a package of agricultural pollution abatement program rules allowing designation of “watersheds in distress.”

In January 2011 the OSWCC consented to DSWR designation of the GLSM watershed and invoking phasing in of rules requiring nutrient management plans for almost all farms as well as significant restrictions on winter application of liquid manure.

Conservation Program Delivery Task Force

The 2010 elections seated a new governor and a new ODNR administration in early 2011. Substitute House Bill 153 required the OSWCC to convene the Conservation Program Delivery Task Force. The Chairman of the OSWCC, in cooperation with the Director of ODNR and in consultation with the Office of Budget and Management (OBM), appointed a task force of nine members which began meeting in August 2011.

The objective of the task force was to develop policy and legislation recommendations that encourage the sharing of services across all levels of government and removing impediments to organizational management and program delivery through SWCDs. The Task Force was to submit recommendations by December 31, 2011, to the Director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

During a five-month period, seven meetings of the Task Force were held. The Task Force considered information from many sources including comments of SWCD staff and Boards of Supervisors, ODNR DSWR staff, survey data on SWCD program use from local government officials, results from a January 2011 Battelle Report on SWCDs, presentations by OSU experts and input of a 22-person advisory group representing many different conservation and natural resource interests from across the state.

On December 31, 2011, the report was submitted. Recommendations suggested streamlining and focusing the current flow of public resources, aligning natural resource priorities, expanding the flexibility of SWCDs to voluntarily adapt their operational structure, and continuing to explore areas where cooperative efforts are possible.

Concurrently, water quality in GLSM and the western basin of Lake Erie was still poor and the state responded by ramping up its involvement especially as it related to Lake Erie. In August 2011, the Directors of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and Ohio Department of Agriculture called together a diverse working group that included research scientists, agribusiness leaders, and environmentalists to discuss how agricultural practices may be contributing to the deteriorating conditions in the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB) and to develop recommendations on how the State of Ohio can partner with the agricultural community to encourage agricultural production practices that promote nutrient stewardship. The working group met for an introductory meeting on August 25, 2011. Additional meetings were held on September 26, October 17, November 7, December 5, December 19, and January 23, 2012.

In October 2011, the three Ohio agency directors established the foundation of their recommendations by encouraging farmers to adopt production guidelines known as 4R Nutrient Stewardship, which is effective in reducing dissolved forms of phosphorus from impacting waterways across the state. The 4R concept promoted using the right fertilizer source, at the right rate, at the right time, with the right placement. The OFSWCD and NRCS immediately aligned themselves and their programs to support the 4R effort.

Nutrient Reduction: Priority One

After the short tenure of several acting chiefs and appointments through most of 2011, ODNR Director James J. Zehringer appointed Karl Gebhardt as Chief of the Division of Soil and Water Resources in January 2012

The anticipated March 2012 release of the Directors' Recommendations on Agricultural Nutrients and Water Quality, prompted the OFSWCD to create and launch the *4R Tomorrow* program for SWCDs and partners with the support of the Ohio Soybean Council, to educate and promote wise nutrient management to conserve water quality and soil health using the 4R nutrient stewardship principles and conservation practices. The OSWCC and DSWR partnered as well, providing grants to SWCDs for collaborative 4R Tomorrow programming statewide.

NRCS significantly increased federal efforts and cost-share programs in the western Lake Erie Watershed and the Grand Lake Saint Mary's Watershed in response to the re-emergence of algal problems. From October of 2009 until mid-2013 NRCS had invested more than 24.5 million dollars in conservation cost-share funding contracts with land managers in the Western Lake Erie watershed. This included more than 8.2 million dollars in federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

(GLRI) funds received by NRCS, nearly 850,000 dollars in GLRI Phosphorous Funding specifically for the Blanchard Watershed, and more than 15.5 million dollars in regular and special NRCS EQIP cost-share funding received by Ohio.

Ohio NRCS also modified its ranking system to give more priority and higher rankings to cost-share applications with nutrient management resource concerns and nutrient management practices for both watersheds. Additionally, NRCS provided accelerated implementation of conservation by increasing staffing capacity in both watersheds. Cooperative agreements supplied needed support to the local SWCDs for Farm Bill program assistance. In the Western Lake Erie Basin, SWCD staff facilitated practice planning, program support and implementation in the watershed; described as WLEB Conservationists and SWAT Conservationists. NRCS hired three additional staff to work exclusively on Grand Lake Saint Mary's via USEPA interagency agreement as well as several additional NRCS staff were detailed to the watershed to assist with development of contracts.

The Ohio state legislature also responded by investing a total of \$2.5 million in cost share funds to implement the Western Lake Erie Basin Nutrient Reduction program. The program paid eligible farmers and other landowners to reduce their nutrient application and placement of fertilizer, plant cover crops and install control drainage structures on cropland in the targeted counties. The program was supervised locally by the SWCDs and funded through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Soil and Water Resources. By July 2013, nutrient reducing BMPs had been applied to over 28,000 acres of cropland and over 400 controlled drainage structures installed.

By mid-2013, of the qualifying 155 livestock farmers in the Grand Lake St. Mary's watershed all but one had submitted their nutrient management plans, in accordance with the Watershed in Distress Rules. Of the submitted plans, nearly 90% area farmers exceeded that requirement by completing the more detailed comprehensive nutrient management plan.

In November 2013, Michael Bailey was named Chief of the Division of Soil and Water Resources. Nutrient Reduction was continued as a major focus of the Conservation Partnership. When the City of Toledo faced a water crisis in August 2014 due to high levels of microcystin at the city's water treatment plant caused by a Harmful Algal Bloom in the Western Basin of Lake Erie, districts in Northwest Ohio with the assistance of state and federal partners again answered the call and assisted landowners with implementing additional practices designed to help reduce the amount of dissolved reactive phosphors entering the lake. Districts in the Ohio River Basin continue to address hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico through the voluntary implementation of conservation practices designed to reduce nutrient loss through surface and sub-surface run-off.

Budget Bill Brings Big Changes

Prior to the Toledo drinking water crisis, the wheels of change as to how farm nutrients, both chemical and manure, would be regulated were set in motion with Governor Kasich's signing of SB150 on May 22, 2014. SB150 required for the first-time farmer certification for the application of chemical fertilizers.

This legislation also revised the membership of the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission by expanding the number of members appointed by the Governor from four to six and removing the Director of Agriculture and the Vice-President for Agricultural Administration of OSU as voting members; it authorized the Directors of Agriculture, Environmental Protection, and Natural

Resources, the OSU Vice-President for Agricultural Administration, and an officer of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts or their designees to serve as ex officio members; and removed the requirement that two of the appointed members had to be farmers, requiring that four rather than all of the appointed members be persons having a knowledge of or interest in agricultural production as well as the natural resources of the state, and requiring one member to represent rural interests and one to represent urban interests.

On July 3, 2015, SB1 became effective. This legislation placed new restrictions on the application of fertilizer and manure within the Western Lake Erie Basin watershed. These restrictions prohibit, with certain exceptions, the surface application of fertilizer consisting of nitrogen or phosphorous and the surface application of manure on frozen ground, on saturated soil, and during certain weather conditions.

Then, a few months later, HB 64, the FY2016/2017 budget bill, appropriated \$350,000 into the Soil and Water Conservation match line item earmarked for distribution to SWCDs in the WLEB to help producers comply with the new regulations in SB1. The other significant change within HB64 was the transfer effective January 1st, 2016 of the majority of the soil and water conservation program, including 25 staff, half the operating and state match dollars, as well as the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission from the ODNR Division of Soil and Water Resources to the Ohio Department of Agriculture under a newly created Division of Soil and Water Conservation housed in Reynoldsburg. This move effectively brought oversight of all agricultural nutrient application, including manure handling for small, medium and large livestock facilities, under one department.

HB64 also included language which transferred the ODNR Division of Soil and Water Resources Silviculture pollution abatement program and authority to the ODNR Division of Forestry along with one staff member. Michael Bailey remained as the chief of the newly created ODNR Division of Water Resources at ODNR. In March of 2016, Kirk Hines, former DSWR assistance chief, was named chief of the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Division of Soil and Water Conservation.

High quality OFSWCD leadership again set the pace for this decade:

Kent Stuckey (2011-2012), a Crawford SWCD dairy and grain farmer.

Joe Glassmeyer (2013-2014), a Clermont SWCD grain and cattle farmer.

Kris Swartz (2015-2016), a Wood SWCD grain farmer

Harold Neuenschwander, (2017 -), a Holmes SWCD Ag business owner