

Soil and Water Conservation FACT SHEET

Ohio's 88 county soil and water conservation districts and ODNR's Division of Soil and Water Conservation help keep Ohio's land productive and water clean through cooperation with farmers and other landowners and partners. They develop conservation plans for crop farms and nutrient management plans for livestock and poultry operations to help protect streams and drinking water.

The DSWC enforces standards when voluntary efforts fail. They also provide watershed restoration and protection plans for Ohio's streams, aquifers and drinking water supplies. But the 88 county districts and the Division of Soil and Water have seen reductions in their operational and program budgets that hinder their ability to meet community and landowner needs. Here's why:

88 LOCAL SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS AND DSWC BY THE NUMBERS:

- ✓ Provide conservation assistance on more than 20,000,000 acres.
- ✓ Assist over 25,000 landowners annually.
- ✓ Help install over 3,500 pollution and storm water control practices per year.
- ✓ Primary SWCD funding is 55% local non-mandated appropriations (county, municipal, township) and 45% state funding (85% GRF, 15% C&D fees).
- ✓ Facilitate local development and implementation of over 40 watershed action plans.
- ✓ Led enrollment of nearly 100,000 acres of cropland along streams into riparian water quality and wildlife practices (in the Lake Erie, Upper Big Walnut Creek, and Scioto River Watersheds).

DECLINE OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION:

- ✗ Half of all requests for conservation practices go unmet annually due to personnel and funding shortages..
- ✗ The number of Division (of Soil and Water Conservation) staff has fallen to 38 in 2008 from 62 in 2000, and from 85 in 1990 - down well over 50%.
- ✗ State cost-share funds for agricultural producers have decreased from \$1.3 million to \$100,000 since 2001; on average, 75 fewer producers receive help annually. Regulatory and assistance programs for 35,000 small- and medium-size livestock producers are at risk.
- ✗ 10,000 conservation practices requested by landowners are backlogged due to SWCD and division staff shortages.
- ✗ 60,000 crop farmers are in need of new or updated conservation plans.
- ✗ New conservation challenges associated with climate change and renewable/alternative energy production from Ohio farms will go unmet; 30,000 livestock and poultry operations need current nutrient management plans.
- ✗ State funds to enroll wetland and riparian water quality/wildlife practices in Lake Erie Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program have been reduced by over 75% since 2000.
- ✗ Over 40 state-endorsed watershed action plans remain largely unimplemented, impeding achievement of water quality, flood protection and other goals.