

# Richland Soil and Water Conservation District

*Conservation, Education and Stewardship*

1495 West Longview Ave. Suite 205B, Mansfield, Ohio 44906

[www.richlandswcd.net](http://www.richlandswcd.net) · 419.747.8686 · Fax: 419.747.8689



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## Richland Soil and Water Conservation District 2021 Highlights

**MANSFIELD, Ohio-** Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (Richland SWCD) is fortunate to end and begin the year with the same staff during the past year and added a new full-time Technician along with 3 part-time interns funded by Richland Foundation grants. The United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) added a new Soil Conservationist.

- To allow the community to attend monthly Board Supervisor meetings **Zoom** was added as an option in addition to in-person attendance at the monthly Board Supervisor meetings. It continues to be an option. Watch for the 2022 meeting schedule on the Richland SWCD website and contact Erica Thomas if you want more information on how to attend our meetings.
- A new Board Supervisor was elected in November, **Jean McClintock** of Shady Lane Alpaca Farm. She is replacing Dave Krichbaum, and the District appreciates his service. **Lanny Hopkins** was also re-elected to serve another term as Board Supervisor. Jean and Lanny's new three-year term begin in January 2022.
- In 2023, **Fred Cooke's** board supervisor position will be up for election. If you are interested in serving as a Richland SWCD Board Supervisor, please contact Erica Thomas for more information.
- Inspired by COVID restrictions and with thanks to CARES funding received from the County Commissioners for audio/visual equipment, we were able to offer a **Conservation Story Time** in partnership with the Mansfield/Richland County Public Library and guest readers. Schools were holding classroom instruction remotely and this option allowed younger audiences and their parents to learn about conservation measures in an interesting, easy to understand and safe manner. Additional reading and activities were also provided. A winter intern funded by the Richland County Foundation – Fran and Warren Rupp helped with this initiative.

- A series of educational **In The Know** videos was launched about a variety of topics related to soil and water conservation. The videos were shared on social media and on the Richland SWCD website, where they continue to be viewed.
- The second annual **Native Plant Sale** was held in June and the number of customers and plants sold increased significantly. Another plant and seed sale is scheduled for May 3, 2022. The sale is hosted to encourage the establishment of native plants species that are best suited for our Ohio climate, attract pollinators and benefit wildlife. Gardening gloves and rain barrels were also offered for sale. Check out the native plant bed maintained by volunteers in front of The Longview Center. New plants were added this year.
- In September, a workshop was held on the benefits of **rain barrels, rain gardens, and the importance of native plant species**. The Cove Pizza Company and Coffee Shop generously offered their location free of charge to host the event. Another workshop is planned for March 22, 2022.
- In conjunction with Malabar Farm State Park, Richland SWCD hosted the first annual **Family Fun on the Farm Festival** in July. The goal was to engage families and raise awareness on the importance of where our food comes from in a fun and educational atmosphere. Richland SWCD and 15 additional partners provided hands-on activities for children and adults. Food trucks provided tasty food and beverages to purchase. Approximately 500 people attended the free event. This event is growing for 2022 and will be held on June 25, 2022 at Malabar Farm so mark your calendars! Community members who wish to provide hands-on activities, food trucks/vendors and photographers are invited to be a part of the 2022 festival.
- In 2020 Richland SWCD began working on a **Local Food Producer List** to help the public find locally grown foods and products. Richland SWCD and partners continued to add new local food producers to the list and share its existence. Partners are Destination Mansfield, Farm Bureau-Richland County, Richland Area Chamber of Commerce, OSU Extension and NECIC.
- Over 800 visitors stopped by the Richland SWCD booth in the Nature Center during the **Richland County Fair** and visitors had the opportunity to learn about Cover Crops, the H2Ohio program and Only Rain Down the Drain, which is the 2021 MS4 program theme. Fairgoers also had the chance to win prizes by spinning the prize wheel when they correctly answered trivia questions related to conservation. Once again, Meijer sponsored the contest and provided prizes for the top three highest scoring entries in the Only Rain Down the Drain contest. Kids also made themed headbands to take and wear.
- Richland SWCD coordinates exhibitors and programs for Nature Park activities held during the Richland County Fair each year. Along with partners and fellow exhibitors, the first scavenger hunt was held and about 50 kids participated.

- In September Richland SWCD staffed a table at the **Bellville Street Fair** where attendees picked up free coasters made from recycled tires and learned about stormwater management.
- In 2022 Richland SWCD and the Richland County Building Department will sponsor a booth at the **Mid-Ohio Home Show and Business Expo**. Information will be available about the county stormwater permit process.
- The **Joint Black Fork Ditch Petition** process began in February is continuing to move forward. The City of Shelby and private landowners brought the petition request to the Richland County & Crawford County Commissioners to ask for the maintenance of an 18-mile stretch of the Black Fork River to clear the river of logjams and dead trees. Two public viewings of the petitioned area were held in May, one in-person on May 20, and a virtual viewing on May 21 to show the drone footage of the river that was recorded by Richland SWCD. The first public hearing was held on August 5 and had approximately 100 participants. The Richland County Engineer's office is working on a Final Report with a projected submission date of next May. After the report is submitted, the Joint Board of Commissioners will schedule the Second (and Final) Hearing to vote on the project. This winter, Richland SWCD staff will survey the 18-mile stretch of river to identify specific locations of the logjams, and to mark the dead trees that will need to be removed.
- Richland SWCD will be a local sponsor for the **Ohio Farmland Preservation Program** again in 2022. This program aims to protect farmland permanently from development. The deadline to apply is March 1, 2022, and farmers are encouraged to apply.
- The **H2Ohio program** kicked off in Richland County in 2021 and brought about a half million dollars into the county so far. The H2Ohio program was launched by the State of Ohio in 2019 to help increase and preserve Ohio's water quality. Under the direction of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the H2Ohio program pays farmers to adopt cropland conservation practices that aim to reduce the over application and runoff of nutrients, primarily phosphorus, because of the algae blooms caused in Lake Erie. By paying farmers to voluntarily adopt the program practices and agree to manage and plan their nutrient applications, Richland County producers are simultaneously benefitting themselves and the environment, including the health of the Lake Erie ecosystem. H2Ohio first kicked off in 14 counties in Northwest Ohio that are part of the Western Lake Erie Basin to address the algae blooms in the Toledo area. The program was expanded this year to the 10 additional counties that make up the Western Lake Erie Watershed, including Richland County. Funding was provided from the Ohio Dept of Agriculture to hire a new technician at Richland SWCD for the H2Ohio program (Evan Stern) to coordinate the program in conjunction with Jordan Keller. Numerous in person and virtual meetings have been held and 39 producers enrolled in the program so far, which represents 25,311 acres, or in other words 1 in 4 acres that are eligible for the program and 16 of the 18 eligible townships are enrolled.

More producers have expressed interest for the final sign-up period that will be offered next spring. Farmers must have a complete and approvable nutrient management plan to apply and stay tuned for deadlines. Join Richland SWCD for free pancakes and information on the H2Ohio farmer incentive program at a pancake breakfast on January 13 at 7:30 a.m. at the Jefferson Township in Bellville, 115 Main Street, Bellville.

- H2Ohio and Richland SWCD encourages the use of cover crops to prevent erosion and retain nutrients in the field. To raise awareness of **Cover Crops** and their benefits, yard signs were made and farmers and landowners have been placing at the edge of their fields. If you are planting cover crops and want like a sign, contact Richland SWCD.
- The **Conservation Creation Arts & Crafts Workshops** begin in January and are expected to be held the second Tuesday of each month from 6 to 8 p.m. Participants at January's workshop will make a snowflake from cinnamon sticks and other furnished materials. The Native Star Workshop was held on November 18, 2021. Participants made a star ornament from milkweed seed pods and other natural materials from furnished supplies. Noah Cable from Pheasants Forever was the guest speaker and discussed the importance of native plants and pollinators.
- A live tree was decorated at **Kingwood Center Gardens** as part of the Community Tree Walk that continues through January 3, 2022. The purpose of the tree decorations is to call attention to the importance of and how manure is managed. When you see the tree decorated to mimic a giant poop emoji you will be at the Richland SWCD tree.
- Richland SWCD participated in the **Richland Gives** online giving event from November 15-30. Richland Gives is designed to encourage everyone to contribute to local nonprofits they care about through a single giving platform. The Richland County Foundation hosts the event to build capacity, grow philanthropy and make the community stronger. Generous donors contributed funds which will be used for soil and water services and mini grants to promote conservation practices.
- A Richland SWCD partnership with Kingwood Center Gardens to create a new podcast series about a variety of natural resource topics will launch next year called "**Our Rich Land**". The podcast will act as another district platform to reach the public regarding conservation topics and issues. Episodes will often feature guests who are experts in their fields. A podcast is an audio program which allows you to choose which "episode" or conversation you want to listen to.

Richland SWCD thanks all who contributed to this year's success including Donors & Sponsors, Volunteers, Partners, Friends and workshop, services, and program participants. Thanks for making it a great year!

Call 419.747.8686 or go to <http://richlandswcd.net/> to learn how to volunteer and about programs and services provided by Richland SWCD.

The Richland Soil and Water Conservation District develops, implements, and assists landowners, government agencies and our partners with a wide range of natural resource conservation programs.

Programs and assistance of the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District are available without regard to race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, age, national origin, ancestry, disability, or veteran status.

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**For more information contact:**

Theresa Rozic Sutter

Community Relations Coordinator

419-747-8685 or [sutter.theresa@richlandswcd.net](mailto:sutter.theresa@richlandswcd.net)

*\*\* Serving all Richland County Landowners with Conservation Assistance\*\**

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