

What is a Soil & Water Conservation District?

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How much do you know about the Paulding Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) or SWCD's in general? Do you know the services we offer or our mission? After reading the articles that we publish, it only makes sense to give a little background on who we are and what we do to serve the residents of Paulding County.

Let's start with some basic facts of how SWCD's came to be. Every County in Ohio has a Soil and Water Conservation District, which is a political subdivision of the State of Ohio. In response to conservation concerns raised because of the 1930's dustbowl, SWCD's were formed in the late 1940's to complement a federal government agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Both local and federal agencies worked together to encourage farmers and landowners to employ practices on the land for the conservation of soil and water resources. Today, SWCD's share the common goal of conservation of natural resources on urban and rural lands.

Each SWCD is governed by a five-member board of supervisors which is comprised of landowners in Paulding County that meet monthly to conduct business of the district. This board has the responsibility of the development and implementation of all short and long-term goals for the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) including the protection and conservation of the natural resources of Paulding County and Ohio. Supervisors serve terms of three years and at least one supervisor is up for election each year. Elections take place at the annual meeting of the Paulding SWCD which is typically held in November.

Our office works closely in cooperation with the Paulding County Commissioners who provide support to the Paulding SWCD in our conservation mission. We work with rural homeowners, homeowners living in town, and producers just to name a few. Current staff for the Paulding SWCD include: District Program Administrator Deb Hubbard, District Technician Daniel Foust, Education Specialist Patrick Troyer, and Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB) Nutrient Specialist Manuel Lay. The Ditch Maintenance Department comprises of Supervisor Ryan Mapes and Technician Sam Smith.

All local government grants from the Paulding County Commissioners or local villages/townships are matched by the State of Ohio nearly dollar to dollar to support SWCD operations, conservation programs, and resource management initiatives. SWCD's work closely with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and are now under Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) Division of Soil and Water Conservation. With these resources, the SWCD is a vehicle for bringing local governments and residents together to address natural resource conservation challenges in urban and rural settings.

The Paulding SWCD seeks to serve the residents of Paulding County in the areas of technical assistance, conservation education, manure management, equipment rental, and serving as local eyes and ears "boots on the ground". In terms of education, we offer school programs, adult programs, tree/fish sales, education models for

teachers, conferences such as the Black Swamp Educator's Extravaganza or Woodland & Wildlife Festival (held with other SWCD's), 5th Grade Field Day, as well as newspaper articles to name a few. Our technical programs include cost share programs for nutrient placement, cover crops, or soil testing. The technician also assists with drainage projects, manure storage structures, heavy use pads, equipment rental, and much more. Our Nutrient Management Specialist serves as a resource to producers and homeowners who have questions or concerns on manure management, hauling, stockpiling, and application.

All Soil & Water Conservation Districts have their own characteristics that make them unique meaning no one district is the same from another, even in neighboring counties. Several things add to the uniqueness of our office such as maintaining the Black Swamp Nature Center building and park and housing the Ditch Maintenance Department. The SWCD and Ditch Maintenance Department work closely with one another when it comes to drainage projects, surveying, and much more.

The Paulding SWCD is entrusted with the maintenance and upkeep of the Black Swamp Nature Center for the enjoyment of the public. Our office is continually making improvements to the trails keeping them clear for you to enjoy a nice walk, working with groups such as the Boy Scouts to provide picnic tables and benches to rest on, and installing mulch or stone on the trails as well. If you have not ventured out to the nature center yet, be sure to take some time and do so! Need some space for your next event, the Black Swamp Nature Center is available for rent, contact us for details!

Would you like to know more about us? Head on over to our website www.pauldingswcd.org, visit us at 900 Fairground Drive in Paulding, visit our Facebook page, or give us a call at 419-399-4771. We look forward to speaking with you and working with you!