

CROSSSECTION



SPRING

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Special Points of Interest:

- Jump into the ecology of vernal pools.
- See how some high school students created their own habitat
- Farmland protected from development



FARMLAND PROTECTED IN NORTH PERRY

SAM KLCO, AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM SPECIALIST

For three adjoining North Perry Village farms, the dream of preserving their land came true in March. Federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program applications originally filed and selected in 2003 were completed, preserving 97 acres of Lake County's valuable agricultural land in perpetuity. The Lake County Farmland Conservation Taskforce facilitated the acquisition of these easements, which are being held by the Lake County Commissioners. Funding to purchase the development rights on these farms was provided by North Perry Village and the Federal Farm and Ranchland Program (FRPP), administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

The FRPP program, which was originally created in 1985 by the Food Security Act and then refunded by the 1996 and 2002 Farm Bills, has helped state and local

governments protect over 300,000 acres of agricultural land in 42 states. To be eligible for the FRPP program, landowners must have prime or unique soils and their agricultural operation must be economically sustainable. Other restrictions apply including required local match money.

The total value of the 97-acre easements according an independent appraiser was \$1,095,000. To complete the easement acquisitions, Lake County combined \$480,000 in FRPP funds with matching funds from North Perry of \$445,000. The three landowners donated the remaining \$170,000 in easement value. North Perry also paid for the administrative expenses, which totaled approximately \$30,000. The Lake County Commissioners provided in-kind support in addition to holding and monitoring the easements each year.

The owners of the three protected farms are Larry and Tina Klco, Fred and Dorothy Kroggel and Mike and Wendy Gerlica. The Klcos own Rainbow Farms, a 33-acre fruit and vegetable operation. Rainbow Farms has been in North Perry since 1983 when Larry and Tina planted their first strawberry field. Today, Rainbow Farms specializes in pick your own strawberries, raspberries, tomatoes, peppers and pumpkins.

Directly north of their property is Townline Nursery. The Kroggel's have owned and operated their small 20-acre nursery since the early 1960's. Townline Nursery grows cuttings and container stock items that are sold wholesale to other nurseries.

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STAFF POSITION FILLED BY FAMILIAR FACE

Lake SWCD is pleased to announce the addition of Sam Klco to the office staff. He is the new Agricultural Program Specialist, a position created this year to work with grant writing, farmland easement applications, farmland preservation presentations, supporting local agriculture through viability and enhancement programs, and assisting landowners with Farm Bill programs.

Before joining the Lake County SWCD full time, Sam was the Director of the Lake County Farmland Conservation Taskforce for two years. During his tenure with the Taskforce, Sam facilitated the permanent preservation of 97 acres of farmland in North Perry Village.

Sam spends his spare time working on his family's fruit and vegetable farm and selling fresh produce every Saturday at the Willoughby Farmers market.

SPRINGING TO LIFE: VERNAL POOLS

A vernal pool is a temporary body of water that is not connected to other surface water. There is no obvious inflow or above-ground outlet of water. It fills by precipitation in the immediate area (usually accumulated snow-melt), or from ground water, and does not support a breeding fish population. Most vernal pools are just muddy spots by the end of summer, but some can remain for several years in between dry cycles.

These temporary ponds can be a tough place to live. The low oxygen levels and periodic dry times keep fish populations from becoming established. A vernal pool in northeast Ohio may just look like a puddle in the woods or in an open field, but in the spring they come to life. Decaying leaves, or other plant material, make up the base of the food web. Bacteria and fungi feed on these leaves, as do some caddisflies, snails, and crustaceans. Any frog tadpoles that hatch out in the pool also rely on plant material.

Predators come into play, including salamander larvae, dragonflies and damselflies, and water scorpions. Salamander larvae will consume other salamander species

that hatch out later, and can even become cannibals if food or water resources are scarce. Vernal pool food webs also reach out to land animals. Turtles, snakes, and raccoons will browse the pools for crustaceans and amphibians. Scavengers are always around to consume any organisms that succumb to heat or run out of water.

Because there aren't fish species present, vernal pools are ideal nurseries for many amphibians. They also can link populations in nearby bodies of water, increasing interbreeding and therefore genetic diversity.

Vernal pools often fall victim to human influences. Historically, ditching, draining, filling, agriculture and development have destroyed or degraded the majority of vernal pools. Disturbing these upland pools and the surrounding vegetation disrupts or destroys the life cycle of organisms that inhabit vernal pools. Since there is no outflow, vernal pools can also be drastically affected by polluted rainwater and runoff.

For more information on vernal pools, check out <http://www.vernalpool.org>

ANIMALS COMMONLY FOUND IN VERNAL POOLS

While many animals may occasionally use them for a quick drink or snack, a few species rely on vernal pools to complete part or all of their life cycle.

Wood Frogs - These small, brown frogs are rarely seen as adults. Wood frogs are among the first to call in the spring, and leave behind fist-sized clumps of eggs in open, sunny vernal pools. The egg masses grow a layer of algae that increases the oxygen around the eggs and later provides food for the newly-hatched tadpoles

Dragonflies - Of the many species of dragonflies in Ohio, the darners and the skimmers are most likely to be found around vernal pools. They are carnivores both as larvae and as adults. The aquatic young will consume small aquatic insects, while the adults will hover around the pool, feeding off of flying insects, such as mosquitoes. Some dragonfly species have eggs that remain dormant until they are wet, while others rely on a short juvenile phase to be completed before the pool dries up. These dragonflies often develop more quickly as the water gets warmer.

Mole Salamanders - This group of salamanders is notable in that the species all have lungs. They live in moist, wooded areas, and reproduce in late winter or spring. Often, many salamanders will migrate to a vernal pool at the same time, creating quite a spectacle. They leave behind communal egg masses; many females lay their eggs in one spot. The larvae and the adults are carnivorous, eating mostly insects and crustaceans. Adults sometimes inhabit underground burrows left by other animals.

Fairy Shrimp - These small crustaceans that swim upside down are an indicator that a body of water is indeed a vernal pool. Fairy shrimp are well-camouflaged filter feeders whose eggs must dry out then be re-submerged to hatch. The dry eggs can survive being eaten, blown around, or carried in mud or on vegetation, allowing the fairy shrimp to move from one pool to another. To avoid predation, they often reproduce in the winter and early spring before most predators are present.

FROGS TO LISTEN FOR IN LATE SPRING AND SUMMER

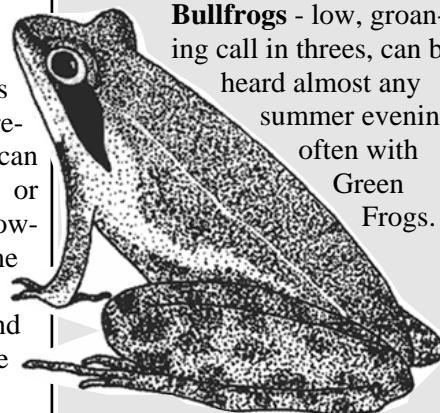
If you have a source of water nearby, the following frogs can still be heard chorusing to find mates.

Gray Treefrogs - loud chirping trill, especially on warm, humid evenings.

American Toads - a long, continuous trill, lasting over 30 seconds, through June.

Green Frogs - a single, percussive note, a bit like a rubber band being snapped, throughout the summer, sometimes in the middle of the day.

Bullfrogs - low, groaning call in threes, can be heard almost any summer evening, often with Green Frogs.



FARMLAND

(Continued from page 1)

Located behind Rainbow Farms and Townline Nursery is the Gerlica farm, owned by Mike and Wendy Gerlica. The 45-acre Gerlica farm has been in Mike's family since the 1920's. Today the Gerlica farm raises nursery stock, raspberries and asparagus, in addition to other vegetable crops.

The easements that each of these landowners placed on their properties require conservation-minded maintenance, continued farming activity and specifically prohibit subdivision and most non-agricultural uses. Despite the restrictive language found in these easements, each of the landowners retains their private property rights and the right to sell or convey their property as they see fit. The easement, however, transfers with the land to all future owners.

In addition to preserving 97 acres of the most productive agricultural land in Ohio, these easements will insure that each year thousands of Lake County residents will be able to purchase local strawberries, raspberries, tomatoes, peppers and pumpkins grown on protected land.



Commissioner Sines, Commissioner Troy, Larry and Tina Klco, Mike and Wendy Gerlica, Fred and Dorothy Kroggel, Commissioner Aufuldish and Mayor Tom Williams of North Perry gather to sign the final documents creating a 97-acre agricultural easement.

LAKE SWCD SEEKS STREAM STEWARDS

As the weather has (finally) warmed up, Lake SWCD is once again looking for volunteers to participate in the Stream Stewards patch program. This program is geared toward youth groups and individuals who have an interest in the natural world and in their surroundings. There are various activities which can be adjusted to a wide range of ages, and there are ways for everyone to get involved. To become a Stream Steward, each participant completes four activities, one from each category; Discovery, Research, Outreach, and Public Education. They are then eligible to become a Stream Steward and identify themselves with a patch.

The Lake SWCD office has several Storm Drain Marking kits ready to use. These kits include plastic markers that state "Dump No Waste, Drains to Stream" along with the adhesive, safety apparel, and all other equipment necessary to let your neighbors know how these holes in the curb connect to the environment. If you would like more information on becoming a Stream Steward, please contact Beth Landers by phone at (440)350-2730 or via e-mail at blanders@lakecountyohio.gov.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION RECOGNIZES LOCAL SCHOOL

Willoughby South High School is now a certified Schoolyard Habitat. They have met the standards and completed an application with the National Wildlife Federation to demonstrate that their land lab provides food, water, shelter and places to raise young. Students, teachers, parents, and community members were recognized for several years of hard work and planning that went in to making the Willoughby South Courtyard a haven for local wildlife.

The courtyard features two large pine trees, some smaller crabapples, a butterfly garden with numerous perennials, a small pond with two bluegill, and several types of bird feeders. There are also scattered benches and a class-sized seating area along a mulch trail. The seats were made from trees that had to be removed from the courtyard. Several English and science classrooms and the library look out over the garden area.

This land lab is a well kept secret, as it is surrounded entirely by the school building. The location created many challenges, as every plant, rock and piece of mulch had to be carried through the building. They also brought earth-moving equipment through the halls of the school to dig the pond area. The design had to adapt to storm water systems and a gas line that ran through the space.

Teachers Carol Fishwick and Linda Schoenfeld have guided the students during this project, and devoted many hours of their own time working on the courtyard.



WHO WANTS TO BE A CONSERVATIONIST?

- 1) The Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) protects ____
 - A) Farmland no longer in production
 - B) Farmland recently returned to production
 - C) Economically sustainable farms
 - D) Agricultural businesses in 'farming zones'
- 2) The FRPP easements in North Perry last ____
 - A) Until the current owner sells
 - B) In perpetuity
 - C) As long as the farm stays in the family
 - D) 30 years
- 3) Landowners with an FRPP easement must ____
 - A) Continue farming
 - B) Not subdivide the property
 - C) Maintain their farm with conservation in mind
 - D) All of the above
- 4) Vernal pools are
 - A) Occasionally dry
 - B) Not adequate fish habitat
 - C) Not important ecological features
 - D) Unique ecosystems
 - E) All of the above
 - F) A, B and D
- 5) Frogs you would expect to hear all summer include
 - A) Green Frogs
 - B) Wood Frogs
 - C) Bullfrogs
 - D) Gray Treefrogs
 - E) A, C, and D
 - F) All of the above
- 6) Vernal pools are not connected to any other body of surface water, True or False.

Answers: 1) C, 2) B, 3) D, 4) F, 5) E, 6) True

LAKE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Toll-free •298-3334 ext. 2730 Madison/Perry

•918-2730 Cleveland/Western Lake County

•1-800-899-LAKE outside Lake County only

Office Hours: Mon.-Fri. 7:30 am-4:00 pm

•E-mail: soil@lakecountyohio.org

•Web site: www.lakecountyohio.org/soil

PAM BROWN, District Secretary/Treasurer	350-2730
DAN DONALDSON, District Administrator	350-2030
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SAM KLCO, Agricultural Program Specialist	350-5863
BETH LANDERS, Education/Information Coordinator	350-2033
BRETT RODSTROM, Stormwater Specialist	350-2092
MATTHEW SCHARVER, Resource Protection Specialist	350-2031
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JOHN NIEDZIALEK, Western Reserve RC&D Coordinator	350-2034

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- American Farmland Trust
- Lake County Farm Bureau
- Nursery Growers of Lake County, Inc.
- National Association of Conservation Districts
- Ohio Federation of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

All Lake SWCD and USDA programs and services are available without regard to race, age, gender, national origin, political beliefs, color, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

The public is invited to attend Lake SWCD's monthly Board meetings, held the fourth Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm at 125 East Erie St., Painesville. Meeting announcements appear under the public agenda in the News-Herald. Please call in advance to let us know you will be attending

Lake County Soil & Water
Conservation District
125 East Erie St., Painesville, OH 44077

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