

Lake County Soil & Water
Conservation District
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Painesville, Ohio 44077

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The Seedling

Cultivating Agricultural Sustainability

Agricultural Newsletter of Lake County Soil & Water Conservation District

Volume 3, Issue 3

One for the Grape PROGRAM LAUNCHED



Lake County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Ohio Wine Producers Association (OWPA) are partnering with the grape industry in Northeast Ohio to protect the unique vineyard lands of the region. Together this summer we are launching a program called *One for the Grape*.

One for the Grape is a locally generated and controlled fund that will be sustained by winery patron donations and supplemented by grants and federal and state programs for the purpose of vineyard land preservation in Ashtabula, Geauga and Lake Counties. It will be directed by a board of local growers, vintners and winery experts, with Lake SWCD and OWPA providing technical and administrative assistance.

One for the Grape will incorporate a two-pronged approach to preserving vineyard lands in the region. The fund will be used to provide compensation to vineyard owners who want to protect their land with an agricultural easement. It will also be available for us to purchase prime vineyard lands outright, protect them with an agricultural easement, and then sell them at a reduced value to people who want to grow grapes.

The second prong is to promote the sustainability of the industry by helping the growers and wineries to be more profitable. This includes providing cost-share for infrastructure needs such as tiling, wind machines and making a transition from Concords to wine-grape varieties. As the fund grows, it can be used to start an incubator kitchen for growers to process value-added products such as Concord grape juice, grape jelly and vinegars. It can be used to sponsor research such as alternative methods of mulching, to help fund the planting of new vineyards for new or existing growers

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ANOTHER FARM IN N. PERRY TO BE SAVED

Ann and Ken Brown of North Perry Village and Lake SWCD received word in May that their application to the 2007 round of the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) was approved for funding. The Browns will be compensated for placing an agricultural conservation easement on 14 acres of their property, keeping it in agricultural use forever. When completed, their farm will join a larger block of farms in North Perry that was protected with agricultural easements through the FRPP in 2005, bringing the total of protected farmland in North Perry Village to 118 acres.

Applications to the FRPP are not possible without a match from a local unit of government. The federal government will pay 50% of the cost of an easement, and the landowner may donate up to 25% of the easement value, but a minimum of 25% of the cost must be contributed as a match from the local government. North Perry Village conducted a cost of community services study several years ago, which clearly demonstrated the value of having local, privately held, productive agricultural lands as part of the community. The study showed that it is more financially prudent to protect agricultural land than to have it developed because it costs the municipality more to provide services to residential land than it receives through residential taxes. As a result of this analysis, North Perry Council agreed to provide a portion of the local match. It understands the importance of having a balance of land uses to balance their budget and maintain the quality of life that the residents desire.

North Perry Village is also revising its comprehensive plan, with the assistance of the Lake County Planning Commission, to include agriculturally friendly provisions. Their zoning was amended in 2006 to include a new Farmland Easement District.

We congratulate the Browns and North Perry Village for their successful application to the FRPP, and for their commitment to the preservation of agricultural land in Lake County!

LAKE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Ohio Federation of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

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JOHN NIEDZIALEK, WR RC&D Coordinator, NRCS

Lake County Commissioners
Ray Sines Robert Aufuldish Dan Troy

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

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.

ONE FOR THE GRAPE *continued*

(Continued from page 1)

and as a low interest revolving loan fund.



Donations to *One for the Grape* are tax deductible and may be made at participating area wineries and businesses; via mail, with checks made out and sent to Lake SWCD, or by credit card on the *One for the Grape* website: oneforthegrape.org. The Lodge and Conference Center at Geneva State Park is offering special rewards for donations of \$100 or more, which include a one or two-night stay at the Lodge, private tastings, and vineyard and cellar tours. More details about this special offer can be found on the *One for the Grape* website.

In the Spring 2007 issue of *The Seedling*, we featured an article about sustainable agriculture and encouraged readers to stay tuned to this forum to find out more about sustainability of agriculture as an industry. *One for the Grape* is a first step in our work to promote the sustainability of the viticultural industry in Northeast Ohio. We believe that having a locally controlled fund that is sustained by people who enjoy wine and the scenic beauty of our vineyards will be a successful way to address the needs of our growers and wineries and lead to a sustainable long-term viticultural industry—one that will serve the present owners into their retirement and attract the younger generations back to the land.



COLONY COLLAPSE DISORDER ACTION PLAN

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics Gale Buchanan announced on July 13, 2007 that United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) researchers have finalized an action plan for dealing with colony collapse disorder (CCD) of honey bees.

According to Buchanan, there were enough honey bees to provide pollination for U.S. agriculture this year, but the industry could face a serious problem next year and beyond. "This action plan provides a coordinated framework to ensure that all of the research that needs to be done is covered in order to get to the bottom of the CCD problem."

The action plan coordinates the strategy of the federal government to respond to colony collapse disorder. It addresses four main components: 1) survey and data collection needs; 2) analysis to determine factors such as prevalence of pests and pathogens, exposure to pesticides, or other unusual factors; 3) controlled experiments to analyze potential causes of CCD; and 4) developing new methods to improve the general health of bees to reduce their susceptibility to CCD and other disorders.

The plan identifies four possible causes for CCD: 1) new or reemerging pathogens, 2) new bee pests or parasites, 3) environmental or nutritional stress, or 4) pesticides. Research will focus on the individual and combined effects of these factors.

CCD first became apparent in the beginning of the winter of 2006-2007 when some beekeepers reported losses of 30% to 90% of their hives. The main symptom of CCD is finding no bees or a low number of adult honey bees with no dead honey bees in the hive. Often there is still honey in the hive and immature bees present. Pollination is critical to agriculture, as honey bees pollinate more than 130 crops in the United States and add \$15 billion in crop value annually.

The plan can be read at: www.ars.usda.gov/is/br/ccd/ccd_actionplan.pdf.

FARM PESTICIDE DISPOSAL

The Ohio Department of Agriculture will sponsor a farm pesticide disposal drop-off day in Wooster on August 22, 2007, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The collection will be at Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center's Fisher Auditorium parking lot, located at 1680 Madison Avenue, about one mile south of State Route 30 in Wooster.

"The Clean Sweep program is designed to protect consumers and the environment," according to Ohio Agriculture Director Robert J. Boggs. "Ohio farmers can protect the environment by properly disposing of unusable and out-of-date pesticides."

The pesticide collection and disposal service is free of charge, but only farm chemicals will be accepted, and not paint, anti-freeze, solvents or other household and non-farm pesticides. To pre-register or for more information, contact the Ohio Department of Agriculture Pesticide Section at 614/728-6987. Pesticide disposal collections have been conducted since 1993 with over one million pounds of pesticides taken in.

Look inside your barn and clean out your unusable pesticides. You might consider pooling your items for disposal with your neighbors and alternate the years that you have to make the trip to Wooster.



The Farm Service Agency (FSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, makes and guarantees loans to family farmers and ranchers to purchase farmland

and finance agricultural production. FSA's loan programs are designed to help family farmers who are temporarily unable to obtain private, commercial credit. In many cases, these are beginning farmers who have insufficient net worth to qualify for commercial credit. In other cases, they are farmers who have suffered financial setbacks from natural disasters, or who have limited resources with which to establish and maintain profitable farming operations.

Some farmers obtain their credit needs through the use of FSA loan guarantees. Under a guaranteed loan, a local agricultural lender makes and services the loan, and FSA guarantees it against loss up to a maximum of 90 percent in most cases.

For those unable to qualify for a loan guarantee from a commercial lender, FSA also makes direct loans, which are serviced by an FSA official. FSA has the responsibility of providing credit counseling and supervision to its direct borrowers by making a thorough assessment of the farming operation. The Agency evaluates the adequacy of the real estate and facilities, machinery and equipment, financial and production management, and the farmer's goals. The weaknesses in all phases of the operation are identified and prioritized. An FSA official then works one-on-one with the farmer to develop a plan of supervision that will help overcome those weaknesses and ultimately result in the farmer's graduation to commercial credit. Unlike FSA's commodity loans, most farm loans must be fully secured and can only be approved for those who have repayment ability.

Farm Ownership Loans

Eligible applicants may obtain direct loans up to a maximum indebtedness of \$200,000. For guaranteed loans the maximum indebtedness is \$899,000 (the amount is adjusted annually for inflation). The maximum repayment term is 40 years for both direct and guaranteed farm ownership loans. In general, loan funds may be used to purchase farm real estate, to enlarge an existing farm, to construct new farm buildings and/or improve structures, and to improve the environmental soundness of the farm.

Farm Ownership Down Payment Loans

Eligible beginning farmer applicants may obtain a direct loan for up to 40 percent of the purchase price of a family-size farm, or the farm's appraised value, whichever is less. Applicants must provide at least a 10 percent down payment on the purchase. The interest rate on the 40 percent

FSA FARM LOANS

portion is fixed at 4 percent, and it must be repaid in 15 years or less. The remaining balance may be guaranteed by FSA if financed by an eligible lender. The purchase price or appraised value of the farm, whichever is lower, may not exceed \$250,000.

Farm Operating Loans

Eligible applicants may obtain direct loans for up to a maximum indebtedness of \$200,000, and guaranteed loans for up to a maximum indebtedness of \$899,000 (amount adjusted annually for inflation). The repayment term may vary, but typically it will not exceed 7 years for intermediate-term purposes. Annual operating loans are generally repaid within 12 months or when the commodities produced are sold. In general, loan funds may be used for normal operating expenses, machinery and equipment, real estate repairs and refinancing debt.

Who May Borrow

Individuals and entities primarily and directly engaged in farming and ranching on family-size operations may apply. A family-size farm is considered to be one that a family can operate and manage itself. Individual applicants under this program must meet certain criteria, including a satisfactory history of meeting credit obligations, sufficient education, training, and experience in managing or operating a farm, citizenship of the United States, an inability to obtain credit elsewhere at reasonable rates and terms to meet actual needs, and a legal capacity to incur loan obligations.

Debt for Nature

People who have a FSA loan secured by real estate may cancel a portion of their FSA indebtedness with the Debt for Nature program. The landowner voluntarily agrees to limit development for a period of time in exchange for a conservation contract with a term of 50, 30, or 10 years to protect wetlands, wildlife habitat, floodplains or areas of high water quality or scenic value. Borrowers may reduce their FSA debt, increase their overall financial stability, conserve wildlife habitat and improve the environmental and scenic value of their farms at the same time with this innovative program.

You can obtain more information about FSA loans and other FSA programs at: www.fsa.usda.gov. The FSA farm loan team for Ashtabula, Lake, Geauga, Trumbull, Columbiana, Mahoning, Stark, Portage, and Summit counties is located at 6970 SR 88 in Ravenna, OH. Jack W. Barthels is the Farm Loan Manager.

Contact Jack by phone at 330/297-7633 ext. 107 or email at jack.barthels@oh.usda.gov.