

Lake County Soil & Water
Conservation District
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The Seedling Cultivating Agricultural Sustainability

Agricultural Newsletter of the Lake County Soil & Water Conservation District

Volume 3, Issue1

*Working to protect and promote the
most valuable farmland in Ohio*

LAKE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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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 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.

Viticulture/Viniculture Economic Impact Study

The Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District, in a joint effort with the Lake County Economic Development Council's Agri-business Committee and the Ohio Wine Producer's Association, has secured a grant from The Cleveland Foundation to fund a Viticulture/Viniculture Economic Impact Study. The project is supported with technical assistance from the Ashtabula office of the Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service and American Farmland Trust.

Viticulture is the cultivation of the vine and viniculture is the science of wine-making.

The production of juice and wine grapes is considered by some to be the last viable agricultural commodity grown in this area. This unique agricultural area, with its sandy soils and its proximity to the temperature buffering effects of Lake Erie, is experiencing development pressures that negatively impact the potential for continued grape production.

The study is part of a concerted



Scenic contribution of grape industry in northeastern Ohio.

effort to address the agricultural sustainability of this industry. The goal is to provide the public and our local decision makers with factual data which documents the direct and indirect economic impact of viticulture and viniculture businesses in Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula counties. The Grand River Viticultural Area, a portion of the study area, grows 65% of all the wine-making grapes in Ohio—underlining the importance of this industry to the region.

The project will also contain a land-use study that seeks to document the income from different land uses (residential, commercial,

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and agricultural) and to determine, as accurately as possible, the costs of providing public services to those land uses.

Both segments of the project will begin in 2007 and be completed in early 2008. Project results will be distributed through various media including printed materials, websites, public presentations and speakers bureaus.

All five organizations are pleased to be partnering on this project. Dan Donaldson, Lake SWCD District Administrator, said, "It is great to find a common-ground project like this on which we can work together."

2007 Farm Policy Campaign

American Farmland Trust (AFT) believes that the key to saving farm and ranch land is to have a strong federal farm policy. It has launched an aggressive campaign to direct the policies of the 2007 U.S. Farm Bill. AFT concludes that Federal farm policies no longer meet the needs of most farmers and ranchers, the land or the public. Current policies do not adequately fund conservation programs, support farmers on the urban-edge (where 80 percent of America's fruits and vegetables are grown), address the conversion of farmland to development, nor help rural communities prosper.

Entitled *Agenda 2007*, AFT proposes a new system that links financial support to environmental stewardship, provides rewards to farmers for producing healthy food, clean air and water, wildlife habitat

and open space, and expands assistance to new and minority farmers.

AFT held forums across the country with hundreds of farmers, ranchers, agricultural leaders and policy experts and developed policy recommendations based upon the themes of those discussions. It proposes a farm policy that supports economically viable farming and ranching, protects our environment, helps our rural areas thrive, and improves the health of consumers.

"These recommendations will recognize and reward farmers for stewardship of our nation's resources and improve the nutrition of our citizens through expanding access to specialty crops and fresh, locally grown food", said Dan Glickman, former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

AFT recommends the following policies:

- Help farmers and ranchers manage risk
- Compensate farmers and ranchers for environmental stewardship
- Expand, improve and simplify working lands conservation programs
- Increase the effectiveness and impact of conservation programs
- Support farm entrepreneurship, rural development and better diets
- Provide the foundation to support this new farm policy framework

Agenda 2007 is good news for farmers on the rural/urban interface because it recommends a farm bill that supports smaller, sustainable farmers. It "sets a course that can lead to a forward-looking, farmer friendly, resource-conserving, sustainable farm bill", AFT, *Agenda 2007*.

District Fills Agricultural Programs Technician Position

We would like to welcome Maurine Orndorff as our new Agricultural Programs Technician. Maurine is responsible for planning and managing the District's agricultural sustainability and farmland preservation programs. She assists local officials, landowners, nurseries and vineyard operators in promoting agricultural viability in the county and assists landowners in applications to state and federal agricultural land protection and sustainability programs. She will continue the work of the District assisting communities with agriculturally sensitive zoning and planning, and educating residents about the eco-

nomic and social contributions of agriculture in Lake County.

Maurine has a B.S. in Geography from Ohio University and a M.A. in Geography from Kent State University. She studied the use of No-Till Agriculture in Geauga County for her Master's Thesis.

Maurine has worked with the Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District for six and a half years, and served two terms on the Geauga SWCD Board. She was involved in the formation of the Western Reserve RC&D (Resource Conservation and Development) Council, and represented Ohio on the National Association of Conserva-

tion Districts Great Lakes Committee for three years. She started a farmland preservation program in Geauga County, and most recently was on the staff of Chagrin River Land Conservancy, which merged with seven other land trusts in the region last year to become Western Reserve Land Conservancy.

Maurine lives in Geauga County with her husband, Jeffrey, and their two high school aged sons. She enjoys being outdoors, walking her dog, reading, practicing yoga and playing the cello with the Chagrin Valley Chamber Orchestra in her spare time.

News Briefs

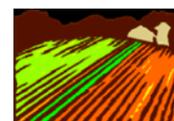


Proposed Legislation

The Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District has submitted a Resolution to the Ohio Federation of Conservation Districts to support draft legislation L-126-1867-2. This bill would enable Boards of County Commissioners to freeze property assessment values on single family dwellings on parcels 35 or more acres at their current appraised values for 20 to 30 years, in exchange for the landowner's agreement not to develop the remainder of the land for the same period of time.

The concept is to provide an incentive to landowners to keep their lands in agriculture for the time being. We don't know what tools we will have to protect farmland in 20 or 30 years, or what public sentiments or the economics of farming will be at that time, but this bill provides an option to communities and to landowners that are feeling pressure from development and rising land values.

We'll keep you posted!



FarmLink

The Farmland Center, a part of the Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy, has developed a program to link farmers and land. FarmLink brings together farmers who have land available for sale or lease and new or expanding farmers who are looking for land. It helps find financing options for new farmers, providing access to capital to start

or expand their businesses. For more information, contact Amelie Lipstreu at 330/657-2355 or amelie@thefarmlandcenter.org. Check out their website (thefarmlandcenter.org) for more information about how The Farmland Center is fostering farm conservation and viability in the Western Reserve.

Conservation Tax Law Update

On August 17, 2006, President Bush signed H.R. 4 into law, which significantly expands the federal tax incentive for conservation easement donations. This expanded tax incentive:

- Raises the deduction a donor can take for donating a conservation easement on his property from 30 percent of his/her income in any year to **50 percent**.
- Allows qualifying farmers to deduct up to **100 percent** of their income.
- Extends the carry-forward period for a donor to take tax deductions for a voluntary conservation agreement from 5 to **15 years**.
- Applies only to easements donated in 2006 and 2007.

This law allows modest income donors to receive greater credit for donating a conservation easement on property they own. It provides the most sweeping changes to conservation tax law in the last two decades and will enable many more Americans, especially family farmers and ranchers, to protect the land they love through voluntary conservation agreements.

EPP & FRPP Deadlines

New funding rounds for the state and federal easement purchase programs will be available in 2007, although the deadline dates are not yet set. The Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP) will tentatively have \$3.25 million available in both 2007 and 2008, with the possibility of going to the voters for an expanded bond initiative for farmland preservation in 2008.

The Federal Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) funding budget has not yet been announced, but the deadline will likely be between April 1 and May 1. If you are interested in learning more about these programs, or would like to apply, please contact Maurine Orndorff, at 350-5863.

Estate Planning

Don't forget the importance of having an estate plan for using and distributing your estate. You have spent a lifetime accumulating your estate. Take the time now to plan for its conservation and orderly transfer to your heirs. The Ohio Cooperative Extension Bulletin: Estate Planning Considerations for Ohio Families is a good place to start. You will need to download it from ohioline.osu.edu/estate as it is no longer available in hardcopy. Give us a call if you have any difficulties obtaining a copy.

