

# Conservation Conversation

## SWCD DIRECTORS

Jake Hortenstine  
Chairman

Susan Holdeman  
Vice Chairman

Gale Meseke  
Secretary

Elizabeth Heinzmann  
Treasurer

Matt Runge  
Director

## DISTRICT STAFF

Tony Pals, RC  
Karen Sanders, AC

## NRCS STAFF

Mary Ann Hoeffliger, DC  
Scott Smith, SCT

## Council 10 Envirothon Held

By Tony Pals

Fayette County Schools participated in the Council 10 Envirothon competition on April 7<sup>th</sup> at Ballard Nature Center east of Altamont. Council 10 is an association of five Soil & Water Conservation Districts including Effing-



Fayette County Winner - South Central Team: Dani Hall, Alexa Irwin, Ross Stock, Derek Harmeier, Beau Manuel

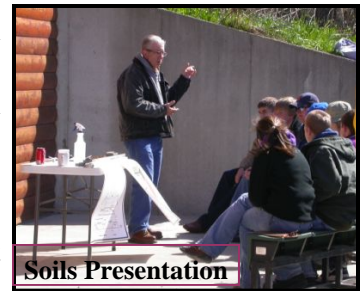
ham, Jasper, Cumberland, Shelby and Fayette counties. Eighteen 5-member teams participated in the event this year. Fayette County schools had seven teams present. Teams were tested in five different subjects dealing with the environment: Soils, Aquatics, Wildlife, Forestry, and Biodiversity in a Changing World. Presenters at each of the five stations were: Ken



Forestry Presentation

Pearson from the ACOE at Aquatics, Gary Potts, with the IDNR at Wildlife, Mary Grapperhaus, also with IDNR at Forestry, and yours truly at Biodiversity. April weather is always pretty unpredictable, and the day of the Envirothon was cold and windy. But, with the help of some

hastily installed plastic around pavilions, everyone made it through the day without too much discomfort. Newton High School took top honors for the contest, with South Central getting the highest score for Fayette County schools. I think I must mention this every year, but this contest is a good example of a bunch of different agencies working



Soils Presentation



Gotsch, Soil Scientist with NRCS at Soils, Ken



Wildlife Presentation

## TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Council 10 Envirothon Held	1
Equipment for Rent	2
Rain Barrels	2
Vandalia Lake Day	3
Nelsie's News	4
Council 10 Envirothon Held	4
Food Plot Seed Available	4
Sharing Our Space	5

**Remember  
eRecycling Day  
June 10-13  
For details contact  
Karen or Tony at  
618-283-1095 ext. 3**

### Equipment for Rent

By Karen Sanders



If you look around at the farmers in your area right now you may notice they are starting to act a little jumpy. Could be because of (what farm wives have learned to call) the fast

approaching, dreaded planting season. I, for one, no longer look forward to an early spring. I love the warm weather, but dread planting season. But as most farm families can tell you, it is a very stressful time of year. Everyone knows there will be lots of long hours working and planting the fields. Then there are the breakdowns. We hope they won't happen even though we all know they are going to. We just never know exactly when it will be. Then there are the meals and messages we end up taking to the field. Well, the SWCD has a few pieces of machinery for rent that may help you out just a little. We



have a Truax grass seeder that rents for \$8.00 an acre. This is the perfect piece of equipment to do the waterways that have to

be planted through everyone's CRP contracts. It works great in ground that has not been tilled, or in pastures that are kind of rough. We also have a



tree planter that rents for \$10.00 a day, if you bring it back clean. Trust me it is well worth the money if you have over 25 trees to plant! It does the work so you don't have to (sound familiar). Then we have a Fabric Plow that costs .60 cents a foot (including fabric) to help put in a fabric check instead of rock checks in those waterways. And last, but not least, we have a root plow that rents for \$25.00 a day. It cuts off feeder roots that sap moisture and fertilizers from your crops. If you are interested in any of the equipment please call the Fayette County SWCD at 618-283-1095 ext. 3, as soon as possible, or stop by the office at 301 South 3rd Street in Vandalia. We hope you have a smooth and safe planting season.



### Rain Barrels

By Karen Sanders

The Fayette County SWCD is selling rain barrels for \$50.00. The 55 gallon barrels are either blue or black, no guarantee of color. As you can tell by the picture they are a very basic design with a spigot, a 90 degree overflow and a 6 inch opening in the top with a grate that can be removed to clean the barrel. The barrel can be attached to the guttering on your house to catch the runoff from your roof. Until the 1940s, the rain barrel was a common sight at farms and homes throughout rural Amer-



ica. Rainwater often was softer than pipe-supplied water, and wooden feed-barrels scattered beneath the steep roof of a barn could catch hundreds of gallons of water during a brief shower. But with modern plumbing, the rain barrel became unnecessary. Today, what many city folks know about rain barrels comes from reruns of "Petticoat Junction" or "Green Acres". If you are interested in purchasing a rain barrel please call either Karen or Tony at 618-283-1095 ext. 3, or stop by the office at 301 South Third Street in Vandalia.

### Vandalia Lake Day

By Karen Sanders



Vandalia Lake Day was held again this year - just like it has been for the past few years - for the 6th graders in the Vandalia Middle School. It is sort of like what we do at Conservation Field Days except we deal more with issues about Vandalia Lake. This year the presenters were: Watersheds - Fayette



County SWCD - Tony Pals, RC, Book Barn Conservation - U of I Extension - Ginger Boas, Wildlife - IDNR - Bob Hammel, Fishing - Vandalia



Sport Fishing Conservation Club - John Blythe, Water Quality - IEPA - Margaret Fertaly & Scott Shasteen, Snakes - ACOE - Phil Pruitt, Rain Simulator - Ef-



ingham County SWCD - Denise Wilenborg, Recycling - SAVE Club Vandalia High School - Scott Boas & Jade Ledbetter,

Soils - NRCS - Ken Gotsch, Soil Scientist. I believe very strongly in conservation education and, when you can teach kids



without them even knowing it, that's even better. I think that's what days like this do! We have to begin teaching the youth because, as most adults know, it is really hard to change once you are set in your ways. One thing about planning a day like this is wondering what the weather is going to be like. For the past couple of years it was been a really wet spring, but we have been lucky both years and



this year we were extremely lucky. I think this was about one of the only nice rain free days we had in May - IT WAS REALLY GORGEOUS!!



**Nelsie's News**

*By Nelson Torbeck*

Here it is the middle of May, and very little field work is done. Looks like a repeat of last year, I hope it is. It was late last year and we had a good year. It sure has been a cool and wet spring so far. It's been a dry week and it sounds like the rest of the week is supposed to be dry and warm up. Talked to Charlie at Church Sunday and he thought that we might be farming by the end of this week. I told him I didn't think we would, we had three and a half inches of rain last week. But I'll have to admit that there isn't any water standing in the low spot north of the house. I hope he's right, it doesn't take long once the fields are dry enough. I'll bet Tyler has got all the tractors' fueled up and ready to go. Hope all of the farmer's have good luck and no breakdown's this year. We've been busy mowing the lawn in between rains. Never did mow the road ditches completely mowed out, always had water in them. We had to sweep the lawn three times already. We don't mind sweeping, it's getting rid of the grass that's a chore. We usually burn it, makes a heck of a smoke. Now that the weather is warming up, we have to mow about every five days, weather permitting. Oh well, we like to mow. I'll mow for an hour, Janice for an hour. I'll trim for an hour, then mow again, and, if the sheep lot's in need of it, more mowing. We mow a lot, Oh well, gives us something to do! You know I never have gotten rid of the skunk. He, or she (hopefully he) is smart. We've smelled it. It just keeps dig-



ging for grubs. I did trap a coon. That's one less to keep out of the garden. That is if we ever get the garden planted! This is as late as we've ever planted. I did get it tilled up one time, maybe this weekend. Let's see, Grand-kids. Tim and Amanda are the proud owners of a home. They've been painting, cleaning and getting furniture, and getting ready for the big day. Tim lives there now. He's been busy getting the yard shaped up. Mowing the lawn, he even ran over a snake. I'll bet that was excitement for a little while, since he has a push mower. Travis is still working and being a member of Kelly's pit crew. Jaron finished his first year of school. He's glad to get home for the summer, only five more years to go. Our little one, Jordy, is still in school. Wait a minute, not little one, he had a birthday. He's a teenager now, and he informed us that he was an adult now. Never saw it fail, when one is young they can't wait to get older, but when one is older one wishes they were young. By golly, I'll use that for an old saying of the day. I thought of another one the other day. Before you start your mouth, be sure your brain is in gear. The questions of the day: "If you think you're better than everyone else, why aren't you better than you are?" The office told me that other day that they are hand delivering their newsletter to the senior citizen center. I think that's great. Not everyone uses e-mail.

**Council 10 Envirothon Held**

*By Tony Pals*

*(Continued from page 1)*



people working at the Envirothon didn't have to be there. They volunteered, and they did so because they felt the results – young people with a better understanding of their environment – was worth the extra effort.

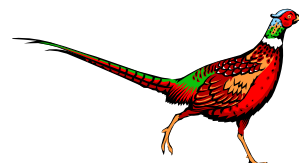
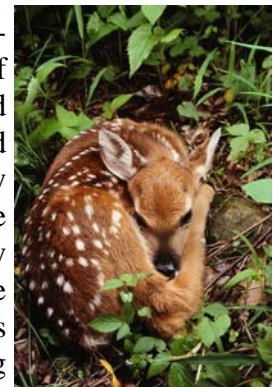
together to accomplish a common goal: conservation education. It's a general misconception that all government employees don't do anything or care about anything but their paycheck. But most of the



**Food Plot Seed Available**

*By Karen Sanders*

We had food plot seed available once again free of charge for anyone interested this spring. The corn and beans were donated by South Central FS and the milo was made available by IDNR (Thanks Gary). We also made arrangements with Mr. Wagner's Vo-Ag class at St. Elmo High School, and, they bagged the seed into 1/3 of an acre bags. Food plot seed should be planted before the middle of June for the best results. Thanks to everyone that donated.



## SHARING OUR SPACE

Della Moen, Earth Team Volunteer, NRCS/Stephenson Soil and Water

This is a very timely article, since “Biodiversity in a Changing World” was the 5<sup>th</sup> element of the Envirothon this year. I presented the 5<sup>th</sup> element so I did some research on the problem. And it is a problem. We have an extinction rate that is the worst since the extinction of the dinosaurs. Kind of scary.

As trees and shrubs come to life in the spring, the diversity among them is obvious even to the casual observer. The variety of blossoms and the various times of emerging leaves in numerous shades of green make a wonderful, slow-motion, changing panorama that is difficult to ignore. Yet we manage to go about our daily lives rarely noticing the rich biodiversity of other life forms all around us.

The richness of the biodiversity of the United States that includes a vast array of wild life forms from bacterial to bald eagles to blue whales, doesn't get measured in our gross national product. This biodiversity “encompasses the broadest range and scale of living variety, from the most basic genetic essence

of the individual to the variety of ecological systems in which all life lives, known by such names as forest, grassland, desert and marine ecosystems. By these biological measures, the United States is rich beyond all standard measures of wealth,” wrote William Stolzenburg in the May/June 2000 issue of *Nature Conservancy*.

A network of scientists, drawing together research over the past 25 years, has determined that there are more than 200,000 species accounted for in the United States out of 1.75 million species formally listed on the Earth. It is likely that there are at least as many forms not yet discovered and/or recorded. Stolzenburg goes on to explain



that there are 12 major ecological zones across our nation – out of only 14 ecological zones that have been identified across the earth.

The early explorers of our country showed an interest in all of the new life they found, reporting their findings as exciting tales of the New World. They collected and identified new species and sub species. New technologies in the Twentieth Century, Stolzenburg re-

minds us, made possible better classification and a clearer vision of the difference between species at the level of chromosomes. The measurement of biodiversity was expanded further with the deciphering of genetic code. In addition, scientists began to realize that much of natural life was being threatened by human activity, including changing and degrading habitat, harvesting native life for food and other uses, introducing alien species (accidentally or for a specific purpose), and spreading disease and pollution. To reverse the damage done by



these human activities continues to be a challenge.

Saving this wealth of biodiversity is another challenge for us today. The United States has plenty of space – only Canada, Russia, and China are larger countries. The wealth of the diversity of life forms found in our country should have plenty of room. Of course, we need our living space too. We can learn to work to meet our needs and, at the same time, share our space by preserving the habitats of other life forms. Della can be reached at [info@stephensonswcd.org](mailto:info@stephensonswcd.org)



The Fayette County Soil & Water Conservation District does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability. This policy covers all programs, services, and procedures of the district, including employment.