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GEAUGA COUNTY

# Marking a milestone

## Soil and Water Conservation District celebrates 75 years

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The Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District, which formed as the state's 29th SWCD on June 24, 1944, celebrates its 75th anniversary this year.

SWCDs were first formed in 1941 by the Ohio General Assembly for the protection and management of the state's soil and water resources.

It is funded through the Geauga County commissioners and receives state matched dollars from the Ohio Soil and Water Commission.

"Throughout the years, the district has spearheaded many new programs, received numerous awards of recognition and worked diligently to become a leading conservation district in the state," Carmella Shale, PE, director/engineer for Geauga SWCD said in a news release. "Awards over the years include Outstanding Education District of the Year, Professional of the Year, Publication of the Year, Outstanding Service and Outstanding Collaboration in a Group."

The SWCD Board of Supervisors is a five-member governing body. Members serve staggered three-year terms on a volunteer basis and are elected at an annual meeting. Any resident of Geauga County is eligible to run.

The board is granted specific powers under Ohio Revised Code and sets policies for county projects and public requests. It works cooperatively with local officials and other agencies.

According to Shale, as communities change, land



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Gauga Soil and Water Conservation district is celebrating 75 years of providing educational programming and workshops for kids and adults.

use changes as well and decisions of property owners impact the area's natural resources.

"Gauga SWCD provides information, guidance, and outreach on natural resource management topics including but not limited to: soils, streams, wetlands, drainage, oil and gas wells, ponds, wildlife, plants and forests," Shale said.

"By providing technical assistance to residents, agencies, townships, and county government, the district helps others comply with current environmental regulations such as erosion and sediment control, agricultural pollution, water pollution, and wetlands protections."

The district also offers plan reviews and educational programming along with workshops and annual tree and fish sales. They also offer aerial photographs, floodplain maps and general property site information.

Over the past 75 years, Geauga SWCD has been

busy, notching numerous accomplishments and activities including recognizing the concern of excessive nutrients in Lake Erie and inland lakes and working with other Northeast Ohio SWCDs to promote the 4R Nutrient Stewardship.

It is the first district in Ohio to implement erosion and sediment control regulations and also identify the need to manage and track construction plan reviews and site inspections. That tracking system has since been implemented by other districts in the state.

"For decades Geauga SWCD has been committed to keeping topsoil on the land and out of our streams and waterways by implementing the Geauga County Water Management and Sediment Control Regulations," Shale said. "Adopted in 1979 by the Geauga County Commissioners, these regulations were the first created in the state, and they protect our water resources by ensuring proper storm wa-

ter and erosion and sediment control measures are in place during construction projects."

Shale cites water quality as a top priority across the state, noting that the SWCDs have always been on the forefront of assistance with natural resource issues.

"With water quality being a high priority and proposed funding to address it specifically from the governor and many state legislators, I foresee the need for additional staffing for Soil and Water Districts to provide increased support and assistance to landowners to find ways to solve water quality problems," Shale said.

"As the old adage goes 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure' rings loud and true when looking at the problems the Western Lake Erie Basin has been facing. It is much easier and cheaper to keep our streams and lakes clean than trying to clean it after the damage is done."