

The County Cooperator

A PUBLICATION OF

THE JEFFERSON SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

September

2026



Did You Know?

Invasive Plants Can Hitch a Ride

Invasive plants often spread when their seeds, roots, or plant fragments accidentally travel from one location to another. Seeds can cling to muddy boots, clothing, pets, bicycles, farm equipment, mowers, and vehicle tires. Firewood may also carry invasive seeds, insects, or diseases into forests and campgrounds.

You can help prevent the spread:

- Clean mud and plant material from boots, clothing, pets, tools, and equipment before leaving an area.
- Brush off bicycles, ATVs, mowers, and vehicles after traveling through fields, forests, or trails.
- Use certified weed-free hay, mulch, and seed when available.
- Burn firewood where you buy it, or gather it only where permitted.

LEARN MORE ABOUT
**JEFFERSON
SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT**
PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Scan
ME



Photo submitted by John O'Donnell

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YOU'RE INVITED

Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District

Annual Meeting, Banquet and Election



Monday, October 26, 2026

St. Florian Hall • Wintersville, Ohio

6:00–7:00 p.m. Supervisor Election &
Photo Contest Voting

7:00 p.m. Introductions followed by Dinner,
Conservation Awards & Recognitions

RSVP by October 19

740-264-9790 • abrowning@jeffersoncountyoh.com

\$32 per ticket



WAYS TO VOTE

WHO MAY VOTE?

- Voters must be age 18 or older
- Reside or own land in Jefferson County, or
- Own a corporation, partnership, association, or other entity registered with the Ohio Secretary of State in Jefferson County.

REQUEST A BALLOT



740-264-9790



wzadanski@jeffersoncountyoh.com

IMPORTANT DATES

ELECTION OPENS

SEPT. 27

BALLOTS DUE

Received by noon

OCT. 26

VOTE IN PERSON

JSWCD OFFICE

500 Market Street
Mezzanine, Suite 4
Steubenville

Mon.-Fri.
8:00 am-4:30 pm

ANNUAL MEETING & BANQUET

Oct. 26 • 6:00-7:00 p.m.
St. Florian Hall
286 Luray Drive,
Wintersville

REMEMBER

Ballots must be received
not merely postmarked
by the deadline.

BOARD MEMBER ELECTION

The Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District are political subdivisions of the state organized by county boundary. Districts are led by a publicly elected and volunteer Board of Supervisors. The Board is comprised of five elected officials serving three-year terms, whose authority is outlined in ORC940. Board Supervisors are responsible for setting the direction of the organization through long range planning and policy setting, acting as ambassadors for the district in their representative communities and providing oversight of fiscal decision and funding activities.

The Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission will cause an election of Supervisors of the Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to be held in accordance with Chapter 940 of the Ohio Revised Code.



My name is **Dave Pié** and my wife Anna and I live in Knox Township, where we raise our six children on our 73-acre farm. Our family farm is home to heritage-breed dairy cows, sheep, and poultry. Farming has given our family a firsthand appreciation for the importance of healthy soil, clean water, responsible land management, and maintaining productive farmland for the next generation. We enjoy working the land and raising our animals, and we believe strongly in being good stewards of the resources entrusted to us.

Professionally, I have spent my entire career in the distilling industry and am one of the owners of RT7 Distillery. As a distiller and business owner, I have experience with agriculture, production, equipment, business management, and working with natural resources and locally sourced ingredients. My farming experience and professional background have given me a practical perspective on the challenges faced by landowners, farmers, and small agricultural businesses. I am interested in serving as a supervisor of the Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation District because I believe in practical conservation that works for the people who own and work the land. I would be honored to bring my experience as a farmer and business owner to the district and help support the farmers and landowners of the county.

Duayne Wetherell currently serves as an elected Jefferson SWCD board member. He was born and raised in Jefferson and resides just outside of New Alexandria. He is a former dairy farmer now living and operating a small farm with his wife, Monica and their five children. Together they raise livestock and harvest and sell hay. He graduated from Buckeye Local High School and received a Natural Resources Historical Interpretive Services degree from Hocking College. While attending college, he volunteered at the historical Robbins Crossing Village. Duayne is presently employed by Crummitt and Sons' Vault Co. He is a member of the Jefferson County Farm Bureau serving on the Board of Trustees. He has represented the Farm Bureau membership in Columbus and in Washington D.C. He also has served on the Young Agriculture Professionals Committee. He was an Assistant Scoutmaster in the Boy Scouts of America where he volunteered as a leader in Steubenville Troop 3. Duayne grew up in the 4-H program as a youth and has now been an adult advisor for the Liberty Gals and Guys 4-H club for over 20 years. He enjoys spending time outdoors, as well as hiking, kayaking and spending time with family.



Piney Fork Trail Construction Is Underway!



In September, Dig It Man excavating began laying gravel for the Piney Fork Trail at the Piney Fork Preserve property.

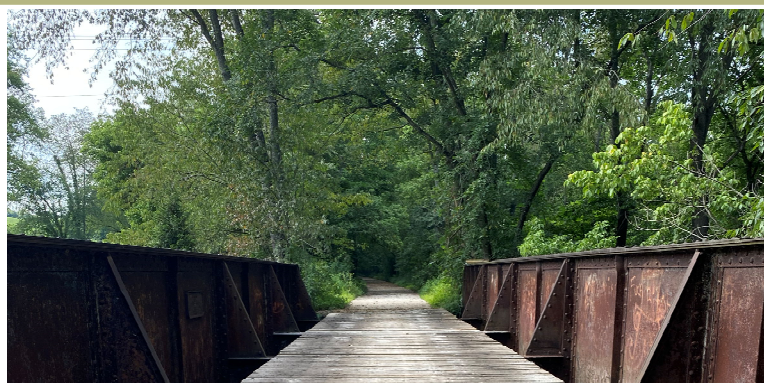
The four-mile crushed limestone walking and bicycling trail will extend from the unincorporated

village of Piney Fork to Hopedale, Ohio, on the former New York Central rail bed, crossing over a series of historic bridges.

Focus will be on protecting and restoring the riparian corridor along Piney Fork creek, which meanders along much of the trail, while also providing a place for people to get outside and experience nature.

Piney Fork at one time was the largest coal mine in the nation. The coal fields to the southeast were one of the richest in the world, and soon a boom town rose...named Piney Fork. Immigrants from around the world came here to begin their American Dream and work in the mines.

The mine operation at Piney Fork was so vast and complex that it became known as the underground city, and was described at one point to have had more light bulbs than the city of Paris and more track than the city of London. At its zenith the mine employed 1,003 men.



The mine closed and the tippie was torn down in 1979. Soon after, the railroad was discontinued and sold. Much of the history of the area was lost to the blades of bulldozers.

Because of its coal-mining history, the area has had a reputation for degraded lands and polluted waters. However, nature and time have helped it to rebound although the area retains some of the effects of its industrial past. The plan is to take a palimpsest design to the land and allow the industrial relics remain and let nature take root and flourish.

Through the generous donation of Jeffco Resources Inc., the District became owners of the former rail yard and corridor. ARPA funds from the Jefferson County Commissioners allowed for construction of the trail.

As weather permits, trail construction will continue this fall with a ribbon-cutting to be announced in the near future.



SALT WATCH

The Jefferson SWCD & the Izzak Walton League of America has partnered to bring the citizen scientist program SALT WATCH to Jefferson County. Residents, schools, and civic groups are invited to participate in this water quality testing initiative to help monitor our county's waterbodies.

All it takes is 10 minutes of your time, the free testing kit, and an interest in local water quality.



Learn more about
SALT WATCH



View our testing
sites & data

Brunch ON THE FARM

In July, the community again had the opportunity to experience a working farm during the Brunch on the Farm event hosted at Mercer Farms in Bloomingdale. Despite the threat of storms and the remnants of smoke from the Canadian wildfires, over 250 guests were in attendance.

Throughout the early morning and afternoon, visitors enjoyed various types of wagon transportation around the farm and to various educational stations. The *Drone Flights in Action* station featured a working agricultural drone demonstrating how technology is being used in agriculture and conservation. At the *Pasture Detective* station, attendees tested their problem solving abilities by identifying plants and deciding which hay samples had the most forage value, while also learning about ways to improve pastures. A *Conservation History* station highlighted the family farm's long history of conservation practice implementation. Guests also had the chance to ask Jefferson County farmers farming questions at the *Ask a Farmer* station, learn about livestock health with a local veterinarian, and watch a rainfall simulator demonstration to observe how soil behaves during a rain event and see how different ways of managing

soils on crop and pasture fields can reduce erosion and compaction and keep them productive. In addition to wagon tours and educational stations, the day featured family-friendly activities including a hay bale fort, corn pit, games and activities. Kids and adults alike could meet farm animals at the *Farm Animal Petting Zoo* and handle live insects commonly found on a farm at the *Bug Zoo*.

Businesses and other vendors were present throughout the day, showcasing services, products, gardening, and information on natural resources and agriculture. Food trucks offered visitors a chance to fill up, recharge, and catch up with friends.

Hosts Bud, Terri, and Rylee Mercer and their team worked extremely hard planning and preparing the farm for the event, even as they continued farming during the busy spring and summer season.

2026 Brunch on the Farm was sponsored by Ohio State University Extension, Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District, Jefferson County Farm Bureau, Ascent Resources™, Tri-State Financial Services, Murray's Restaurant, Illumination Financial Group, RSQ Print & Design LLC., and Mercer Farms.



THANK YOU to our 2026 vendors for a wonderful market season! Although we are not a large farmers market, customers throughout the summer commented on the exceptional quality of products and expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to buy fresh from local farmers and producers. Thanks also to Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church and the Wednesdays in Wintersville Committee for their continued partnership!

JEFFERSON SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT PHOTO CONTEST

CAPTURE NATURE.
CELEBRATE OUR HERITAGE.
INSPIRE CONSERVATION.

CATEGORIES



AMERICA 250 YEARS ON THE LAND

Honoring 250 years of our nation's history, heritage, and connection to the land. Show us how the land has shaped America.



FOR THE LOVE OF BIRDS

From backyard visitors to migratory wonders, share the beauty, behavior, and diversity of birds in their natural habitats.



CONSERVATION IN ACTION

Highlight the projects and practices making a difference in natural resources.



FAVORITE THINGS

Share a photo of something you love in agriculture or the environment.



PHOTOS DUE BY
OCTOBER 16, 2026



- Open to amateur photographers
- Original photos only
NO AI images
- Photo must be taken in
Jefferson County

For complete rules and entry form:

www.jeffersonswcd.org

Who is Eligible?

Only amateur photographers are eligible. (An amateur photographer does not possess a professional photographer tax identification number for the sale of photographs). **The photos must be taken in Jefferson County however the photographer is not required to reside in the county.** The contest is not open to any JSWCD Supervisor, staff, or immediate family members. Original photos only NO AI.

Entry

Submit 8x10 print(s) along with a digital copy (if possible) to the JSWCD office by 4:30 on Friday, **October 16th.** Digital prints can be provided on a flash drive or emailed to abrowning@jeffersoncountyoh.com. There is no entry fee and you may enter your work in any of the categories offered. **A total of four (4) photos may be submitted per photographer in one or multiple categories.** Photos must be taken within Jefferson County and PHOTO SUBJECT MATTER MUST BE CONSERVATION/NATURAL RESOURCES RELATED TO BE CONSIDERED FOR JUDGING. Original photos only NO AI.

Each photo submission must be accompanied by an entry and photo release form.

Categories

AMERICA 250 YEARS ON THE LAND

Honoring 250 years of our nation's history, heritage, and connection to the land.
Show us how the land has shaped America.

FOR THE LOVE OF BIRDS

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CONSERVATION IN ACTION

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FAVORITE THINGS

Share a photo of something you love in agriculture or the environment.

Judging

First Round:

Entries will be judged to determine appropriate category. First round judges reserve the right to switch prints to a more appropriate category or to disqualify if the entry is not suitable for any of the categories. Photos in each category will be displayed at the JSWCD Annual Meeting and Banquet for voting. Participants need not be present but are invited to attend the event. Event information is available at www.jeffersonswcd.org and our Facebook page.

Second Round:

Those attending the JSWCD Annual Meeting and Banquet on October 26, 2026 will vote for the 1st place winners in each category by secret ballot. The winners will be announced at the closing of this event and recognized on the JSWCD Facebook page and website within a few days following the event.

Judging Criteria: Technical excellence (sharpness, lighting, composition, exposure) • Originality/creativity • Interest (photo features a recognizable center of interest in relationship to the category)

Awards

1st place winner in each category will receive a \$50.00 cash award.

Use of Prints by the Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District

Submitted photos are unable to be returned. All entrants agree that any photo submitted to the photo competition may be used for marketing and promotion purposes directly related to the mission of the conservation district. Credit will be given to the photographer when possible. Digital photo provides a clearer image for promotional purposes as opposed to scanned image.

Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District Applies for H2Ohio SWCD Conservation Pilot Program Funding

In May, the Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District applied for \$250,000 in grant funding from the Ohio Department of Agriculture through the H2Ohio SWCD Conservation Pilot Program.

H2Ohio is Governor Mike DeWine's statewide water quality initiative designed to address complex issues impacting Ohio's waters. Launched in 2019, H2Ohio uses a comprehensive approach guided by science and data to reduce algal blooms, stop pollution, and improve access to clean drinking water by supporting best farming practices, road salt runoff reduction, litter cleanup, dam removal, land conservation, and water infrastructure revitalization.

The SWCD Conservation Pilot Program is designed to fund locally led, water-quality-focused conservation projects, fulfilling a need to develop and evaluate agricultural water quality improvement approaches on different farming practices across Ohio's varied landscapes with a focus on pasture and hayland.

If grant funding is awarded to the JSWCD, the program will be focused on helping local livestock farmers improve soil and water resources on their farms through the installation or implementation of conservation practices that address non-point source pollution. Emphasis will be placed on practices that improve water quality by reducing, abating, assimilating, or eliminating sources of phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment in local streams and waterways.

64 Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) across Ohio were eligible to apply for \$2 million in funding, with a cap of \$250,000 per application.

It is anticipated that 8 to 12 Soil and Water Conservation Districts will receive funding. Grant awards could be announced as early as October.



Participants learn about using a tire trough for watering livestock during the April 2026 Eastern Ohio Grazing Council pasture walk held at Circle V Farm in Richmond.

Photo by Beth Krupszak

RECYCLING CREATIVITY



Recycled Name Plate Contest Winner

Jr. fair livestock exhibitor, Amelia Flory, was the winner of the JSWCD Recycled Name Plate Contest cash drawing at the Jefferson County Fair. Her colorful “Freckles” and creative use of recycled cereal boxes and toilet paper roll tubes to give “Amelia” a 3-D effect earned her not only the Best of Barn 5 but also Best of Fair recognition. Congratulations, Amelia, and thank you to the 68 creative participants that made this years contest an overwhelming success.



**A coffee mug worth of
salt is enough to clear a
20'x50' driveway**

Discovering the Birds of Jefferson County

In September, local birding enthusiasts were invited to join us for our first Bird Walk at the Preserves Properties, held at Hellbender Preserve. The walk was led by volunteer and Jefferson County resident Scott Albaugh, who has been an avid birder for more than 30 years. Scott holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and master's degree in Wildlife Biology. Scott has led hundreds of bird walks and nature programs throughout his career and especially enjoys helping people of all experience levels discover birds and the natural world around them.

If you were unable to attend in September, Scott will be leading another Bird Walk on **Saturday, October 17th at Quaker Ridge Preserve!**





Chainsaw Safety Workshop

**Saturday
OCTOBER
24**

9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Harrison State Forest
Trail Riders
Campground
85250 Camp Rd,
Cadiz, OH 43907

Send registrations to: OSU
Extension - Harrison County,
538 N. Main St., Cadiz, OH
43907. Pre-registration is
required. Call 740-461-6136
or email lyon.194@osu.edu
with questions or to register.

A lunch will be included with
registration.

Chainsaws are essential pieces of equipment to manage a woodland. However, when not used safely, they become incredibly dangerous, causing operators to be at an increased risk of life-threatening injuries.

In this workshop, trail maintenance crews and landowners will have the opportunity to learn about safe operation of chainsaws, including:

- the necessary proper personal protective equipment
- what to do before turning on a chainsaw
- hazard mitigation
- practical saw operations

Instruction provided by the Ohio Forestry Association. Those who plan to handle a chainsaw during the class will need to sign a liability waiver. Cost is \$20 per person to participate in the training. For those seeking CSAW Basic Certification, cost of certification is \$100.





Jefferson Soil & Water
Conservation District
500 Market Street
Mezzanine, Suite 4
Steubenville, OH 43952
740-264-9790

Nonprofit Org.

U.S. Postage

PAID

YLS

JSWCD Mission Statement

“Promoting Conservation of
Our Lands and Waters”

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Duayne Wetherell, Vice Chair
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Clint Finney, Civil Engineering Technician
Stuart Heavilin, Soil Conservationist
Rachael Cline, Natural Resources Specialist

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Aaron Dodds, Projects Manager
Mark Petho, Stormwater Resources Coordinator
Aidan Sammut, Cross Creek/Yellow Creek Watershed Program Mgr
Crystal Conaway, Ag & Natural Resources Technician
Open, Education & Outreach Coordinator
Amy Browning, Bookkeeping Manager/Program Assistant

ASSOCIATE BOARD MEMBERS:

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Jodee Verhovec

We are online and on Facebook
www.jeffersonswcd.org



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If you would like to stop
receiving printed newsletters and
would prefer to receive electronic
versions via email, please instruct us
by contacting us at 740-264-9790 or
abrowning@jeffersoncountyoh.com

We appreciate your help in minimizing
unwanted printed mail.

If you still want the print issue, no
action is required.

Columbus Day (Office Closed) · October 12
JSWCD Board Meeting · October 19
Veterans Day (Office Closed) · November 11
JSWCD Board Meeting · November 16
Thanksgiving Day (Office Closed) · November 26
JSWCD Board Meeting · December 21
Christmas (Office Closed) · December 25