

*Van Wert*  
*Soil and Water*  
*Conservation District*



*Long Range Plan*

*2024—2028*



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On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, we would like to express our gratitude to all the individuals and groups who have showed a willingness to protect the soil resources and insure water quality in Van Wert County.

The Long Range Plan has been put together to provide guidance to the staff, supervisors, and general public on what we feel are the priorities for the next five years in Van Wert County. The ultimate goal is the improved use of land, water, and related resources for the benefit of all people in the area.

For those landowners who are not familiar with the Van Wert Soil and Water Conservation District's programs and activities we encourage you to use this document to familiarize yourself with us. We would like the opportunity to help you with water quality concerns, solve your soil erosion problems, and answer conservation questions.

Sincerely,

Board of Supervisors

Dave Kemler, Craig Pohlman,  
Elliot Callow, Ryan Mohr, Darryl Ricketts

## **About the District**

The Ohio General Assembly passed House Bill #646 on May 16, 1941 providing for the organization of Soil Conservation Districts in Ohio. Van Wert County was organized February 15, 1949 by the landowners, operators, and land users of the county. Being able to assist land users in solving their soil and water problems more efficiently, by the use of proper soil and water management to maintain and improve the standard of living of farm operators of the county. This made Van Wert County the 82nd District to form in Ohio. On February 11, 1964 the name was changed to Van Wert Soil and Water Conservation District.

## **Board of Supervisors**

The District is governed by a five member, publicly elected Board of Supervisors. Each supervisor term is for a period of three years. The supervisors are elected to represent the citizens of the county in carrying out a good resource management program. Duties include establishing sound policies and priorities concerning the work to be accomplished, hiring employees to carry out the daily work load, managing all funds, facilities, and equipment belonging to the District, report to the public concerning resource conservation needs, and annually report to the public of the years accomplishments.

## **Financial Assistance**

Financial assistance is received from the Van Wert County Commissioners and the State of Ohio-ODNR, Division of Soil and Water Resources matching annually a large percentage of the local funding. The District receives a grant from the Van Wert County Foundation which provides funds for the Long Term Water Quality Study, the Cows and Plows program, and the Education program. Also, a grant from the State of Ohio to provide funds for the H2Ohio program.

## Services Provided

- ◆ Soil survey information and conservation planning.
- ◆ Survey and plan designs of water management systems and erosion control practices such as: erosion control structures, grass waterways, water and sediment control basins, surface drainage, filter strips, animal waste storage facilities, and windbreaks.
- ◆ Consult assistance is also provided for subsurface drainage.
- ◆ The annual tree sale provides landowners quality, low-priced seedlings for windbreak and wildlife habitat establishment. Assistance with design and layout of windbreaks is provided. Fruit trees and seed packets are for sale. A tree planting bar is available.
- ◆ A spring fish sale provides local pond owners a low cost opportunity to stock the pond.
- ◆ School programs, presentations, field days, pond clinics and conservation topics to farm and civic organizations.
- ◆ Technical assistance.

## VAN WERT COUNTY SETTING

Van Wert County is located in northwest, Ohio, the first county east of the first meridian (which forms the Ohio-Indiana line) and south of the main base line (U.S. Geodetic Survey). Van Wert is the county seat, and is 120 miles northwest of Columbus, the State Capital, and 35 miles southeast of Fort Wayne, Indiana. There are a total of 262,650 acres in the county.

The county was founded in 1820 from Indian Territory. It was named after Isaac Van Wart, one of three captors of Major Andre, a famous spy of the American Revolutionary War. The first settlement was established in the southwest corner, on the banks of the St. Mary's River near the present town of Willshire.

The county is part of what was originally called the “Black Swamp”. About 70% of the county has dark colored soils. Along the southwest and southern borders is a part of the Fort Wayne moraine, which accounts for the light colored Morley and Blount soils and a more undulating topography. From the moraine area to the beach ridge (approximate location of Lincoln Highway) there is an area of land characterized by low ridges of light colored soils and drainage ways of dark colored soils. These are mostly Blount and Pewamo soils. From the beach ridge to the north boundary are soils formed as a part of an old prehistoric lake bed. Dark colored, heavy clay soils of the Hoytville and Latty series characterize the area. The higher ridges and “islands” are mostly Nappanee soils. Paralleling the streams are narrow areas of flood plain soils such as Sloan, Wabasha, and Montgomery. The beach ridge marked the southern shores of the old lake and is a prominent feature running diagonally across the District. It accounts for most of the sandy soils found in the county and is made up of soils like Belmore, Digby, and Haney. Consult the District office for more information and detailed soils maps.

## **MAJOR LAND USE AREAS**

### **Cropland**

This area is mostly gently sloping to level land. It is composed in large part of fine textured clay and silt soils, with not enough sand to give good aeration and drainage. These must be attained through good soil structure and tilth.

Methods of getting and maintaining this soil structure constitute one of the chief problems confronting land users. Cropping systems that maintain good tilth, and fertility programs that promote water quality maintain soil fertility are needed.

Removal of excess water from both the surface and the root zone by open ditch systems, shallow field drains, land smoothing, and subsurface drainage systems, is another necessary practice.

Soil erosion on the majority of cropland is limited to sheet and rill erosion. Some gully erosion occurs but is largely limited to the southern and southwestern portions of the District. Ditch bank erosion is also a problem on some of the larger streams. In the lakebed, soil and wind erosion can be a problem in late winter and early spring.

### **Pastureland:**

This use of land is decreasing yearly. The areas are mostly small paddocks, or areas along streams. Producers are becoming more dependent each year on confined feeding. The severe loss of soil structure due to tramping and the more economical use of high priced land is bringing about this change. Fertility, grazing patterns, and stand maintenance are problems to be considered in this land use.

### **Woodland:**

There are limited acres in the District on which timber production is its' most economical use. Almost all woodlots occur on what could be excellent cropland except most are wet and need drainage. However, the benefits to the entire community, in decreasing wind intensity, in recharging of the deep water table, and in fostering a more favorable wildlife habitat, call for saving and rehabilitating the still existent woodland.

### **Wildlife Areas:**

These areas consist mostly of odd or inaccessible areas, and small unproductive woodlots, food, shelter, and development of desirable habitat are the three main challenges the District has in making the best use of these areas.

Each year the District sells wildlife packets and windbreak materials. These are made available to anyone and there are no restrictions on where they may be planted. Van Wert SWCD is part of the Northwest Ohio Windbreak Program.

The use of land in Van Wert County according to the Agricultural Statistics are:

Cropland -	227,300
Pastureland –	1,500
Forestland –	10,000
Urban / Other land-	<u>23,850</u>
	262,650

**Cropland Erosion:**

Soil erosion is a continuously occurring natural process that loosens and transports soil particles. Soil can tolerate small amounts of erosion and remain productive for agriculture. When erosion is above this tolerable limit, the soil resource base cannot be maintained and the future ability of the soil to produce crops is threatened. The tolerable soil loss (“T”) ranges from three to five tons per acre per year, with the most erosive soils in Van Wert County having a “T” of three. The use of various conservation tillage methods has reduced soil erosion caused by water and wind in recent years. Most highly erodible areas have been reduced to 2T due to conservation compliance requirements of farm programs.

**Cropland Drainage:**

Wetness of particular soils is a limiting factor on crop production. There are over 200,000 acres of class IIw and IIIw soils in Van Wert County. Approximately 86% of the cropland soils require drainage to produce top crop yields.

## **Prime Farmland**

There are 218,200 acres of prime farmland in Van Wert County. Approximately 96% of the surface area is prime farmland. Prime farmland is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as land that is best suited to producing food, feed, fiber, forage, and oil seed crops.

Seven thousand two hundred nineteen acres of agricultural land are considered not prime farmland because of frequent flooding.



## **Van Wert SWCD Long Range Objectives**

The Van Wert SWCD has identified several areas of concern for protection and wise use of our natural resources in Van Wert County.

From this, the District has compiled a list of long-term objectives and five year goals and actions that prioritize what need action.

These objectives encourage the protection, use, improvement, and maintenance of our natural resources to serve both private and public interests in agricultural and non-agricultural uses in Van Wert County.

These objectives are:

- 1. Water Quality / Water Management**
- 2. Education and Public Awareness**
- 3. Nutrient / Pesticide Management**
- 4. Technical Assistance**
- 5. H2Ohio**

## Objective One-

### Water Quality / Water Management Issues

Cropland acreage in Van Wert County exceeds 221,000 acres. Runoff water from unprotected cropland carries phosphorus, nitrate, and certain pesticides into drainage systems along with eroding soil. These runoff pollutants generate an economic burden and represent a loss of productive topsoil. Dairy and livestock operation waste also have a negative impact on water quality if not properly stored and utilized.

#### Objective:

Involve rural and urban landowners in partnership to improve water quality through the promotion and installation of conservation practices and wise land use decisions.

#### Goals and Actions –



*Promote water quality measures through the news media*

*Promote the increase of conservation tillage*

- Cooperate with OSUE, NRCS, FSA, and other organizations to promote conservation tillage.

*Promote the establishment of filter strips, field windbreaks, field borders and filter recharge areas.*

- Promote CRP / CREP practices through news media and public meetings

- Provide technical and consultative assistance to landowners on establishing water quality practices.
- Cooperate with OSUE, NRCS, FSA, and other organizations to promote CRP and CREP practices.
- Cooperate with the ODNR, Division of Forestry Northwest Ohio Wind-break Program.

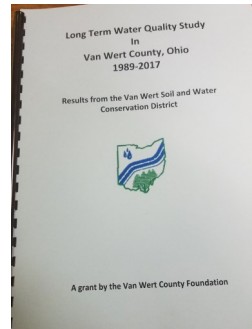
*Reduce water quality impact of soil erosion on HEL (Highly Erodible Land) and other erosion prone areas.*

- Follow-up with cooperators in critical erosion areas (primarily Willshire Township and slopes along streams) to promote needed conservation practices beneficial to water quality.
- Cooperate with FSA and NRCS to encourage Conservation Reserve, EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program), WRP (Wetland Reserve Program), and other programs to protect eroding areas.
- Utilize grass waterways, grade stabilization structures, water and sediment control basins to reduce gully erosion.
- Provide technical and consultative assistance to landowners, land users, and municipalities on controlling erosion and other water quality enhancing practices.
- Offer private well testing program partnering with Heidelberg College.

*Increase public awareness of local surface and ground water quality through Long Term Water Quality Study.*

- Evaluate ground water and surface water quality through sample analysis.

- Use program information to promote water quality enhancing practices.
- Publish results booklet annually
- Provide program results to general public, school, municipalities, and others.



## Objective Two –

### Education and Public Awareness

The key to the success of every conservation program and practice is to provide current and accurate information and education activities. A broad based information / education program is needed to address the diverse natural resource conservation needs of the present and future landowners in Van Wert County. Information and education activities are a vital part of each of the four objectives of the Long Range Plan. We strive to make youth education programs relevant to the Ohio State Academic Content standards. Public awareness of the conservation needs of Van Wert County and of the services provided by the Van Wert Soil and Water Conservation District are critical to the success of the conservation programs.

#### Objective:

Provide information / education materials and activities promoting conservation and the wise use of our natural resources to make the public more aware of the services provided by the Van Wert Soil & Water Conservation District.

#### Goals and Actions -

*Increase public awareness of District activities and services.*

- Through the quarterly newsletter to inform the public..

- Provide presentations to civic groups or clubs on activities.
- Generate news releases on conservation programs.
- Distribute written material outlining District purpose, programs, and goals.

Provide a Conservation / Education Program brochure to teachers

*Increase public awareness of ongoing water quality issues affecting waters of the State.*

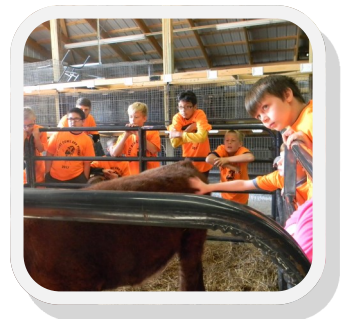
- Newsletters, news releases regarding water quality
- Informational meetings

*Conduct or participate in the following activities and annual observances.*

- District Annual Meeting
- Soil Stewardship Week
- Van Wert County Fair
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*Conduct, sponsor, or participate in the following youth conservation education activities:*

- College scholarship
- Cows and Plows Field Day
- Fourth grade tree program
- Northwest Ohio Envirothon



- Other youth group conservation presentations as requested
- Use non point source pollution education models and materials

*Conduct or participate in programs, meetings, and tours for landowners and users on conservation topics.*

- Windbreak / woodland workshops
- Pond clinics
- Conservation tours, meetings, or field days

### **Objective Three –**

## **Nutrient / Pesticide Management**

To manage nutrients and pesticides properly, one must know how, when, and where to use them, whether it is commercially produced or organic in the form of animal waste. Correct management ensures that crops receive the nutrients they need to produce profitable yields, while allowing few nutrients to runoff.

### **Objective:**

Improve water quality through the promotion of nutrient / pesticide management and water quality benefits.



### **Goals and Actions:**

- *Promote the implementation of Best Management Practices for nutrients and pesticides.*

- Cooperate with NRCS, OSU and other agencies to develop an effective information / education program to promote nutrient management systems.
- Cooperate with the Division of Soil and Water concerning the Ag Pollution Abatement Program to acquire cost-share for management systems.
- Cooperate with local Health Department and EPA concerning pollution problems.
- Participate in livestock concerns as requested.
- Continue to work with other agencies by providing livestock producers emergency response techniques for waste spills.
- Promote Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans, manure handling and secondary containment facilities for liquid fertilizers through the EQIP program.
- Continue to promote 4 R Tomorrow program stressing the importance of The Right Source, The Right Rate, The Right Time and the Right Place.
- Work with ODA on the Senate Bill1 Program.



## **Objective Four –**

### **Technical Assistance**

The majority of Van Wert County soils are heavy textured clay, nearly level to gently sloping, poorly drained soils of the Hoytville and Pewamo-Blount associations. Surface and subsurface drainage systems and runoff control structures optimize agricultural use. Gully and stream bank erosion is also reduced. Commercial and private development on Van Wert County soils require proper water management planning to avoid potential flooding erosion, and drainage problems.

## Objective:

Provide technical assistance and consultation to farmers, landowners, developers, and units of Government to reduce water management problems. Make public aware of available services.

## Goals and Actions:

*Reduce gully and stream bank erosion through technical assistance.*

- Provide technical assistance on erosion control structures and grassed waterways.
- Work with cooperators to insure that practices needed for conservation compliance are properly maintained.

*Promote conservation programs offered.*

- Promote filter strips, windbreaks, filter recharge areas.
- Provide survey, design, and conservation planning of practices.

*Inform contractors on proper construction practices and specifications.*

- Provide on site technical assistance and inspection.

*Reduce water related development and homesite damages by increasing the awareness of proper use and limitations of Van Wert County soils.*



- Provide site evaluations for landowners, developers or units of government.
- Publish news releases concerning technical assistance.
- Distribute soil survey books.

## **Objective Five –**

### **H2Ohio**

*Promote and implement the H2Ohio Program.*

- Provide technical and consultative assistance to landowners/land operators who have enrolled in the program.
- Cooperate with Ag Retailers and Consultants to promote H2Ohio's BMP (Best Management Practices)
- Cooperate with ODA to promote program's BMP (Best Management Practices)
- Provide Communication to producers in the program through newsletters/website/social media.



This program and plan of work will be revised as the need arises in keeping with the objectives and changing role of the District in servicing the conservation and development of natural resources within the District. The signing of this program and work plan was authorized by the District Board of Supervisors at a meeting held on August 8, 2018.

### **Van Wert Soil & Water Conservation District**

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Board of Supervisors-Chairman

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Board of Supervisors-Secretary

### **Van Wert Soil and Water Conservation District – Ohio**

**Originally adopted May 21, 1951**

**Revised and revision adopted 6/3/63; 3/3/70; 4/11/72; 2/14/79;  
3/15/83; 11/12/86; 12/12/91; 2/1/97; 8/13/03; 12/11/08, 12/11/13, 3/13/24.**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Van Wert Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors wish to thank the following for their assistance in developing and implementing a resource management program in Van Wert County:

**Van Wert County Commissioner's**

**Ohio Department of Agriculture – Division of Soil & Water**

**ODNR – Division of Forestry, Division of Wildlife**

**Ohio Soil & Water Conservation Commission**

**Van Wert County Auditor's Office**

**Van Wert County Foundation**

**Van Wert County Engineer's Office**

**Ohio State University Extension**

**USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service**

**USDA/Farm Service Agency**

# **Van Wert Soil & Water Conservation District**

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**Web site: [www.vanwertswcd.org](http://www.vanwertswcd.org)**

**Facebook : Van Wert Soil & Water Conservation District**

## **Mission Statement**

**To protect and conserve the natural  
resources for all residents by providing  
technical, educational, and  
financial assistance.**