

The following italicized insert was written December 7, 1950 by James A. Muster, first SCS Soil Conservationist in Pickaway County. It was recorded on Pickaway SWCD's first Annual Meeting program.

There is an old saying that "It's too late to lock the stable, after the horse has gone!"

It's more than sobering to think of how seriously that old saying applies to the destructive manner in which we have handled our agricultural lands; the only source of our food, fiber and water resources.

There are on file writings of George Washington in which he lamented the damaging effects of soil erosion and fertility depletion.

Those records date back some 175 years. It wasn't until 1915, over 140 years later, that anybody did anything significant about it. It was in 1915 that Dr. M. F. Miller at the Missouri Experiment Station, made the first measurements of water runoff and soil losses from a FIELD, under different cropping and cultural practices.

This first report didn't appear until 1923. The results were startling to people who cared anything for the land.

The annual loss per acre from uncropped, cultivated land was 41 tons of topsoil; from continuous corn, 19.7 tons; from continuous wheat, 10 tons; from 3-year rotation "that too many of us still follow" 3 tons per acre per year; from bluegrass, only 1/3 ton per acre.

"Mere conservation," stated Dr. Miller, "is quite insufficient; the welfare of agriculture demands the use of widespread SOIL IMPROVEMENT practices."

Following Dr. Miller's report, all the experiment stations in the U.S. and its possessions, began work designed to stop soil losses and to institute methods of soil improvement.

Before Soil and Water Conservation Districts

1928 Hugh Hammond Bennett and W. Chapline authored the first comprehensive appraisal of soil erosion, "Soil Erosion, A National Menace".

Feb. 16, 1929 U.S. Congress authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to establish 10 Regional Soil Erosion Experiment Stations across the nation. One was located on a farm near Zanesville, Ohio. The objective of the stations was to measure soil and water loss, determine the extent of the soil erosion problem, and to work out methods of control and prevention of soil erosion.

1933 During the Great Depression the National Industrial Recovery Act of June 16, 1933 provided unemployed persons with a chance to work on erosion problems. On September 19, 1933 the Soil Erosion Service was established with Hugh Bennett as director. The Soil Erosion Service was funded with \$5 million in emergency employment funds and operated out of the Department of the Interior.

May 12, 1934 High winds swept thick clouds of dust from the Great Plains to the Atlantic Ocean. This catastrophic storm served as the catalyst for public outcry and congressional action for soil and water conservation throughout the nation.

Apr. 27, 1935 U.S. Congress adopted, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed, the Soil Conservation Act (Public Law 46) which declared that soil erosion was a menace to the national welfare and authorized broad powers to the new agency to attack the problem. The Soil Conservation Service replaced the old Soil Erosion Service and was now under the USDA.

(taken from gloucesterscd.org) Soil Conservation Districts were formed back in the 1930's when national attention was focused on the devastating effects of the Dust Bowl. The problems associated with the Dust Bowl were due primarily to poor land management practices that resulted in mounting soil erosion, floods, and sky-blackening dust storms that swept across the nation.

Due to the Dust Bowl effects, public opinion was aroused. As a result in 1935, Congress passed Public Law 46 that declared soil and water conservation and wise land use a national policy. In 1937 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt wrote to all governors, recommending state legislation allowing landowners to form soil and water conservation Districts. These Districts would provide the opportunity for informed participation and cooperation of local citizens.

History of Pickaway Soil and Water Conservation District

The Pickaway County Soil Conservation District was organized under Ohio Law, December 9, 1944. The guiding fathers were Pearl Fogle, Soil Conservation Service; Kelsey Blair, Agricultural Extension Service and concerned farm people in the county interested in wise land use. April 14, 1945, the District was approved by a referendum vote of the people and became the 32nd District in Ohio.

The District is governed by a board of five supervisors who are elected by the landowners and occupiers of Pickaway County. The supervisors serve three year terms and receive no pay for their service. They are responsible for developing the local programs, obtaining and disbursing funds and setting priorities. They also have the authority to hire District staff and to oversee all District activities. The first board of supervisors, elected on December 9, 1944, included Chairman, Ralph E. May of Circleville; Vice Chairman, Frank A. Beatty of Orient; Secretary, Lawrence R. Liston of Circleville; Treasurer, Stewart E. Beers of Ashville; and Member, Wayne F. Brown of Groveport.

The first major objective of the District was to secure technical help. A memorandum of understanding and plan of work were negotiated by the Board of Supervisors with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS – now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service - NRCS) in 1945. John L. Shriver, SCS Area Conservationist, James A. Muster, SCS Soil Conservationist, and Martin R. Sharrett (1948), SCS Conservation Technician were assigned to the Pickaway County District.

A landowner having a soil and/or water problem, and wanting to find a solution, applied to the District office for assistance. After the board approved the application, the District

would furnish technical aid through the SCS in planning and applying the practices needed to correct the problem.

Although the District was originally established to assist “agricultural” landowners, today the objectives of the district are much broader. The District staff provides technical assistance to agricultural and urban landowners as well as the Regional Planning Commission, County Environmental Health Department, County Engineer, County Commissioners, and other governmental offices in the area of residential and commercial development.

The District has close ties with Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Soil and Water; Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission; Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts; and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The District is considered a local subdivision of the state government and receives funding from the County Commissioners, State Legislature, and the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

May 16, 1941 Ohio Legislature passed House Bill 646 which established The Ohio Soil Conservation Committee as an agency of the State of Ohio with offices at The Ohio State University.

May 13, 1944 Ninety Nine Pickaway County landowners filed a petition with the Ohio Soil Conservation Committee for Pickaway County to be organized as a Soil Conservation District. The purpose of the proposed soil conservation District was to provide farmers technical assistance in voluntarily changing their farming practices in an effort to eliminate erosion and other causes of loss of valuable land.

Sep. 9, 1944 County wide voting by the farmers took place and 86% of the 311 votes cast were in favor of the creation of the Pickaway County Soil Conservation District.

Dec. 2, 1944 F. Kelsey Blair, Pickaway County Agricultural Agent, sent a letter to Pickaway County Landowners informing them of the favorable vote on September 9, 1944 to organize the Pickaway County Soil Conservation District and that the next step was to elect supervisors. A ballot was enclosed with the letter and landowners could mail their ballot or go to the County Agent’s office, located in the basement of the Post Office on Court Street or the Farm Bureau Office (159 East Main Street, Circleville) to cast their vote.

Dec. 9, 1944 The first Pickaway County Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors was elected. They were Chairman, *Ralph E. May* of Circleville; Vice Chairman, *Frank A. Beatty* of Orient; Secretary, *Lawrence R. Liston* of Circleville; Treasurer, *Stewart E. Beers* of Ashville; and Member, *Wayne F. Brown* of Groveport.

Apr. 14, 1945 Pickaway County Soil Conservation District was approved by a referendum vote of the people and became the 32nd District in Ohio. Secretary of State, Edward J. Hummel certified the Articles of Incorporation of the Pickaway County Soil Conservation District.

Nov. 26, 1945 The Soil Conservation Service (now known as Natural Resources Conservation Service-NRCS) assisted the District by assigning *James A. Muster* as the first Soil Conservationist to assist Pickaway County Soil Conservation District. The office was housed upstairs in Room 8 of the Knights of Pythias building located at 114½ North Court Street in Circleville.

Nov. 29, 1945 The Pickaway County USDA County Council was organized in accordance with a directive of the Secretary of Agriculture, replacing the former War Board. Ralph E. May and James A. Muster were council members.

1945 During Pickaway County Soil Conservation District's first year Soil Surveys were made on the farms of 5 applicants. There were 7 applications for conservation farm plans covering 1,148 acres of farm land. The fee for applications was \$3 for farms up to 500 acres and \$1 for each additional 100 acres above 500.

From 1946 annual report Pickaway Soil Conservation District received guidance from Pearl Fogle, District Conservationist, Lancaster and J. L. Shriver, District Conservationist, Columbus.

1946 During the District's second year 57 farmers applied for and received assistance in developing conservation plans for their farms totaling 9,993 acres.

Jun. 1948 Martin R. Sharrett began working as a Soil Conservation Service Conservation Aid.

1948-1965 Curtis O. Steele, Area 5 Conservationist

Feb. 1950 Wayne H. Rhoades of Five Points assumed duty to do special follow-up work with cooperators with farm programs.

April 28, 1950 Office moved to Sieverts Building above the Cussins & Fearn Store at 122 North Court Street.

Dec. 7, 1950 First Annual Meeting of the Pickaway County Soil Conservation District.

Jan. 8, 1951 Donald V. Archer of Caldwell, Ohio assumed duty as SCS, Soil Conservationist taking James Muster's place. Don was also referred to as Work Unit Conservationist.

Nov. 30, 1951 Office moved in with Production & Marketing Administration (now FSA) in accordance with congressional action. PMA provided the financial assistance for the conservation programs. Agriculture Extension Service assisted the PCSCD by providing the Educational program of the District. The location in 1951 is thought to be 159 East Main Street. PMA and Ag Ext Serv. were located in the same building according to the 1948 phone book.

1953 PMA changed its name to Commodity Stabilization Service (CSS).

1957 District address shown on conservation plans is 159 East Main Street. Maybe this is the move Nov 1951 - see above.

Jan. 60 Bernice Hunsinger was hired as Part-Time Clerk in the office of the local SCS. Bernice was hired to work 3 days per week and was paid by the district, \$1.50 per hour. She was the first PSWCD employee.

1960 Name changed to Pickaway County Soil and Water Conservation District and the office moved to 206½ South Court Street, Circleville.

1961 CSS changed its name to Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

Feb. 11, 1964 Name officially changed to Pickaway Soil and Water Conservation District.

1966 Office moved to 1450 North Court Street, Circleville. ASCS was located at 1440 North Court.

Mar. 21, 1966 Robert Bower became the second PSWCD employee when he was hired by the District to assist Don Archer after Casey Neal resigned.

1967 Don Archer began doing a weekly radio program on (WNRE ?).

Jul. 1969 PSWCD initiated a soil survey to be used by all people concerned. It was done in cooperation with the Ohio Dept of Natural Resources, Division of Lands & Soil. Field Party Members were Crew Chief-Norris L. Williams, D.L.S.; Soil Resource Specialist-James W. Kerr, D.L.S.; and Students in Training-Danny Lemaster and Dorwin McKinney, both of D.L.S.

1973 Hill Group Ditch became the first ditch in the county to be on County Maintenance and it was the first in the state to be for agricultural drainage and not for flood control. Pickaway SWCD received the Goodyear Conservation Award.

1976 Fall of 1976 through Spring of 1979 Rob Skidmore was a "district aid". His salary was partially funded by the district. In 1984 Rob was hired by the NRCS to work in the Pickaway County office.

1978 Shirley Bowser sworn in as first female Pickaway SWCD Board member. Also, 1978 was the first year PSWCD had the responsibility to design, inspect, and maintain the 8 ditches on county maintenance. A crew of 4 young men were kept busy cutting brush, clearing debris and rip-rapping areas of ditches.

May 1980 Pickaway Soil Survey released. Initial conception was in 1962. The Soil Survey is an in depth analysis of all the soils in Pickaway county.

1981 Pickaway county received its Ohio Capability Analysis Program (OCAP) maps. These maps show where development is best suited, what land should be retained for agricultural use, where problem areas are, such as poorly drained or unstable soils. The maps contain soil, geology & ground water information.

1985 First No-Till Drill purchased by the District to expand the conservation tillage program.

Apr. 27, 1985 Pickaway County commissioners proclaimed this day to be "Soil Conservation Day".

1985 First Pickaway SWCD Newsletter was published.

1986 First Pickaway SWCD Ditch Maintenance Newsletter published

Mar. 1986 First documented CRP sign up

Apr. 1989 PSWCD office moved to current location 110 Island Road, upstairs in the County Services Building.

1994 ASCS changed their name to Consolidated Farm Service Agency.

Sep. 8, 1994 Pickaway County Commissioners proclaimed this day Pickaway SWCD Day in recognition of the 50th anniversary.

October 20, 1994 SCS changed to NRCS

January 16, 1996 Consolidated Farm Service Agency dropped the Consolidated and became the Farm Service Agency.

2001 PSWCD web site published

Current (as of Feb. 2005) Pickaway SWCD Board of Supervisors

Chairman, C. Randall Metzger of Williamsport (supervisor since 1990)

Vice Chairman, Bill Black of Ashville (supervisor since 2000)

Secretary, Brad Zwayer of Groveport (supervisor since 2004)

Treasurer, Bill Black of Ashville (supervisor since 2000)

Member, Donald Minor, Sr. of Kingston (supervisor since 1985)

Member, Vickie Sheets of Mount Sterling (supervisor since 1999)

Current (as of May 2005) Pickaway SWCD Employees:

District Technicians, Lloyd F. McManus, Jr. (hired 1979), Douglas A. Kohli (hired 1981), and Chris Pancake (hired 2005) perform technical and engineering duties.

Office Administrator, Sue A. Lumley (hired 1994) performs management functions and administrative coordination of programs. Sue is also the Urban Technician.

Education Coordinator, Karen J. Halley (hired 1995) is responsible for the District Education Program.

Administrative Assistant, Tawn Seimer (hired 2000) is responsible for performing secretarial and clerical duties.

Current Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees:

Dan E. Garver (1989), District Conservationist

J. Robert Skidmore (1984), Civil Engineering Technician

Joe Weber (2003), Soil Conservationist

Technical Services provided by the District and financed in part by United States Department of Agriculture and/or financed by the landowners:

Basic Farm Plans	Woodland Harvest Cutting
Conservation Plans	Livestock Watering Systems
Diversion Ditches	Terraces
Farm Ponds	Conservation Crop Rotation
Erosion Control Structures	Pond Management
Grass Waterways	Reforestation
Open Ditches	Animal Waste Holding Facilities
Pasture and Hayland Plantings	Subdivision Plans Reviewed
Tile Drainage	Systematic Tile Drainage
Tree Planting	PTO Terraces
Wildlife Habitat Plantings	Critical Area Seedings
Cover & Green Manure Crop	Water and Sediment Control Basins
Ditch Bank Seeding	Grade Stabilization Structures
Fish Pond Stocking	Wetlands
Minimum Tillage	Dry Hydrants
Surface Field Ditches	Urban Site Inventory and Evaluations
Strip Cropping	Wetland & HEL Determinations
Spring Development	Filter Strips
Meadow Seeding	Conservation Buffers
Golf Course Seeding	Livestock Watering Developments
Covercrop	Wildlife Habitat Management
Streambank Erosion Control	Nutrient Management
Land Shaping in bottoms	Pest Management
Contour Farming	

Various Activities & Programs

- Annual Meetings began in 1950
- Air Tours (to bring awareness of serious “farm” problems to show successful conservation farming methods)
- Soil Conservation Essay Contest - gave school age children opportunity to see and learn about Soil Conservation
- Land (or Soil) Training and Judging Contests
- Rural Life Sunday - Today known as Soil Stewardship Week
- 1955 Soil Conservation Field Day on the County Home Farm
- Regular Board meetings are held on 3rd Mondays of each month and are open to public
- In 1959 started and sponsored the Soil Conservation 4-H Club known as Pickaway Soil Savers. Members were age 10 to college age.
- County Fair Exhibits
- 7th Grade Soil Conservation Tour
- Newsletters began in 1960 relaying structure and recent activities of the District
- Pumpkin Show window exhibits
- Sponsored 2 Soil Conservation Camp delegates
 - First recorded recipients: Joan Hunsinger and Tom Barnes in 1959
- Conservation Tour
- Basic Soil Survey
- Education Leaflets handed out to all 4th graders
- Essay Contest
- Teachers’ Workshops
- Outstanding Conservation Farmer
- Promoted small watershed programs to provide flood control and recreation
- Tractor Rodeos & Plowing Contests
- Queen of the Furrow Contest
 - 1957 18 Pickaway County girls competed
- Affiliate members donated funds to further the educational program.
- Tree & Fish Sale
- Conservation Poster and Coloring contests
- Youth & Science Day
- Envirothon
- Farm City Tour 10/14/73
- Environmental Education Scholarship to a teacher
- Pond Clinics
- Conservation Teacher of the Year
 - First recorded recipient in 1978 - Alan Cohen of Gibisonville
- Ohio Forestry Camp sponsor
- Woodland Wildlife Management Clinics
- Field Days
- No-Till Workshop
- Kitchen Conservation Workshops
- Animal Waste Workshops
- Newspaper Articles
- Experience Earth Day Camp for 3rd & 4th Graders
- Elementary School Field Days
- Classroom Conservation Education presentations
- 4-H program supporter
- Member of Pickaway County Regional Planning Commission
- Current State and Federal Cost Share Programs:
 - Conservation Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Wetland Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, Agricultural Pollution Abatement