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find your expected soil type(s) through [Web Soil Survey](#), which can give you a general idea about drainage and buildability, but to confirm site specifics, you may want to consult with a [Certified Professional Soil Scientist](#). A simple soil test through [OSU extension](#) (usually about \$15) can look at Nitrogen, Potassium, Phosphorous, and pH, and can help you make informed decisions about your fertilizer use and what plants you would like to plant. For industrial sites or older properties where previous uses may be unknown, we recommend also testing for lead, heavy metal, and other contaminants.



When looking for **the existence of wetlands or floodplains/flood zones**, you can look to the [National Wetland Inventory](#) or [FEMA](#) mapping. The existence of wetlands or floodplains may complicate or restrict building on a property. You should consider the existence of these resources along with your future plans for the property. Wetlands and waterways frequently require more thorough permitting and frequently require permits with [Ohio EPA](#), [US Army Corps](#), or other state/federal agencies. Check with local zoning staff for [Riparian Setbacks](#) or [Stream Corridor Protection Zones](#), as these can also limit site development.

Along with obvious pathways such as streams, rivers, or wetlands, looking at the contours of a property can be helpful in identifying areas that may only convey water during heavy rain events, or anticipating spots on a property that may have poor **drainage**. Contours for the county can be accessed through the [Franklin County Auditor's parcel viewer tool](#) if you turn on the contours layer. To ensure adequate drainage, soil grading and gutters/downspouts/sump pumps should all direct water away from your foundation. Much like soil mapping, contours are not 100% accurate at small scales and come in varying levels of detail. Looking at contours tends to be more useful on large properties, but you can usually discern drainage pathways or grading with just your eyes.

**Easements** are restrictions on certain parts of the property and usually pass from owner to owner of the deed. Easements can be for conservation purposes or for public utilities. FSWCD holds many [conservation easements](#). These are typically marked and typically restrict any sort of building or modification without permission. You should be sure to consult with your realtor and the seller to ensure if utility or conservation easements are present, where they are, and what they entail. It is always better to know what you can do where on the property, as building on or modifying an easement can lead to the structure being removed/asked to be removed, and additional costs for any repairs or remediation may fall to you.

Looking at older **aerials** can also give you some insight into past uses, when houses or structures were built, when trees were planted, and can sometimes even indicate wet spots on areas of the property which would indicate poor drainage. The [Franklin County Auditors website](#) has aerials (usually dating back to about 2005) of the county. FSWCD has much older aerial photos that can be reviewed if you reach out and set an appointment with us. But – even tools such as **Google Maps** and **Google Street View** can give you plenty of information! If you notice a hole in the curb and water running along the gutter constantly, even in dry conditions, that can be an indication of a sump pump working overtime and would typically lead us to believe there are drainage issues or a high groundwater table.

*(continued on page 2)*

# The Urban Review

## Stormwater and Erosion Control Newsletter

### Natural Resource Review for Existing & Prospective Landowners

# Natural Resource Review for Existing & Prospective Landowners

(continued from page 1)

While our urban team deals mostly with development and construction, we are also plant lovers! Pay attention to **any trees or vegetation on the property**, their health, and whether they are invasive. You can refer to [ODNR's invasive species list](#) and [Ohio Invasive Plant Council's](#) invasive lists for more information on what plants are invasive and what they look like. You should consider removing invasive plants, shrubs, and trees, and should budget money for herbicide, tree removal from a qualified contractor, or extensive invasive treatment by a qualified contractor. You should also take note of how close trees and vegetation are to structures, electrical lines, and utility lines. If you have large trees on the property, especially ones close to utilities or structures, you should hire a [qualified contractor](#) to assess their health and prune or remove them as needed. When choosing to plant trees, shrubs, grasses, or other vegetation, always call [OUPS](#) for public utility marking, be aware of your private utilities, and be aware that root intrusion can cause issues, especially for sewer or drainage pipe.

These are just some of recommendations we have for both new homeowners and seasoned real estate speculators. We are not real estate professionals, but we do have significant experience doing desktop reviews using the above services and fielding landowner calls about natural resources. Always do your due diligence and keep in mind that not all issues with a house or property will show themselves immediately.

## REMINDER: Draft Data Center General Permit Comments Due January 16th

If you missed out on attending the virtual public hearing on December 17th, you can find the recording, presentation slides, fact sheet and draft permit on Ohio EPAs website <https://epa.ohio.gov/divisions-and-offices/surface-water/permitting/wastewater-discharges-from-data-centers--general-permit>

Submit comments via Ohio EPA's [online comment portal](#). Comments will be accepted through Jan. 16, 2026.

## In-Person Webcast Viewing Returns!



CENTER FOR  
**WATERSHED  
PROTECTION**  
Webcasts

## Give Yourself Some Credit!

Join us as we view the 2026 webcast series hosted by the Center for Watershed Protection (CWP)

[View the Entire 2026 Lineup & Register Now!](#)

Webcast #1: January 21st [Green Infrastructure Under Pressure](#)

Webcast #2: February 18th [Emerging Contaminants in Urban Runoff: Risk, Regulation, and Remediation](#)

Webcast #3: March 18th [Navigating MS4 Regulations – Compliance, Challenges, and Best Practices](#)

## Other Upcoming Events

**Ohio Tree Care Conference** | February 3-5 | Newark, OH  
[https://www.ohiochapterisa.org/aws/OCISA/pt/sp/conference\\_home-page](https://www.ohiochapterisa.org/aws/OCISA/pt/sp/conference_home-page)

**OTA Winter Conference** | February 4-6 | Columbus, OH  
<https://www.ohiotownships.org/annual-winter-conference>

**OEFFA Annual Conference** | February 13-15 | Newark, OH  
<https://conference.oeffa.org/>

**Clean Water Contractor Expo** | February 19 | Sandusky, OH  
<https://erieconserves.org/clean-water-contractor-program>

**IECA Annual Conference** | March 1-4 | Fort Worth, TX  
<https://ieca2026.eventscribe.net/>

**2026 Ohio Rivers Symposium** | March 26 | Columbus, OH |  
<https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-ODNR/nature-preserves/ohio-rivers-symposium>

**CWP 2026 National Watershed & Stormwater Conference** | April 14-16 | Charlotte, NC  
[https://www.cwp.org/2026\\_conference.php](https://www.cwp.org/2026_conference.php)

**North American Snow Conference** | Apr 26-29 | Cleveland  
<https://www.apwa.org/events/north-american-snow-conference/>

**Ohio Brownfields Conference** | May 6 | Westerville, Ohio  
<https://www.ohiobrownfields.com/2026conference-information>

**Ohio Stormwater Conference** | May 6-8 | Sandusky, Ohio  
<https://ohstormwaterconference.com/>

**2026 River Rally** | May 11-14, 2026 | San Antonio, TX  
<https://www.rivernetwork.org/connect-learn/river-rally/>

**Choose Clean Water Conference** | May 18-20 | Lancaster, PA  
<https://www.choosecleanwater.org/our-conference>



## Water Quality Partner Featured Practice

### Be Salt Smart for Water Quality

Did you know that many lakes and rivers across the country are contaminated with chloride? This toxic chemical comes in large part from the salt and deicers we use to keep ice off our roads in winter and is virtually impossible to remove once it enters a waterbody. ***Just one teaspoon of salt contains enough chloride to pollute five gallons of water forever.***

If you utilize salt as part of your winter maintenance, follow the best practices below to limit impacts to your watershed.

#### FIRST, THE TRUTH ABOUT SALT

- There is no such thing as an environmentally friendly salt or deicer and currently, no regulations that require truth in labeling within the salt and deicing industry. All such chemicals cause damage to our waterbodies, plants, wildlife and infrastructure, and should be used as little as possible.

#### SHOVEL, SCRAPE, REPEAT

- The best way to remove snow and ice is the old-fashioned way: clear the snow and scrape or chisel away the ice.
- Avoid ice buildup by shoveling early and often and redirecting downspouts away from hard surfaces.

#### WHEN TO USE SALT

- If it's a warm day and the sidewalk is wet, don't use any deicers. The sun is already doing the job for you, and throwing salt onto the ice isn't going to hurry the process; it's just going to send deicer down the storm drains.
- If you must apply salt or deicer, apply the product on ice only; do not apply it on dry pavement.
- Double-check the label on your salt or deicer product to make sure it will work before you apply it. Rock salt doesn't work below 15°F.

Not responsible for snow/ice management at your home or business? **You can still help!**

**Talk** to your snow removal service provider or property management company about current practices and **share** this information!

- ◊ [Template for reaching out to Contractors](#)
- ◊ [Template for reaching out to Property Managers](#)

[www.franklinswcd.org/be-salt-smart](http://www.franklinswcd.org/be-salt-smart)



#### Want to get more involved?

Test salt levels in your local waterways and add your findings to a national database.

Take the Salt Watch Pledge, and receive a FREE test kit!

<https://iwna.org/salt-watch/>

#### HOW MUCH SALT TO USE?

- More salt does not equal faster melting — just more pollution and wasted money.
- Shoot for a 3-inch spread between salt granules. For \$10–\$20, a hand spreader can make the job easier and more accurate. To be more exact, try to apply no more than 1 pound per 250 square feet of pavement. (Tip: A regular-size coffee mug typically holds about 1 pound of salt.)

#### WHAT ABOUT SAND?

- Use sand when it's too cold for salt to work. Sprinkle just enough to provide **traction** on walkways. Sweep up any excess after the ice melts and dispose of it in the trash or reuse so that it doesn't get carried into stormdrains. **Remember, sand pollutes too.**

Learn more at [https://www.franklinswcd.org/be-salt-smart](http://www.franklinswcd.org/be-salt-smart)

The communities below participate in the Water Quality Partner Program

Bexley | Canal Winchester | Dublin | Franklin County Board of Commissioners | Gahanna | Grove City | Hilliard  
New Albany | Obetz | Reynoldsburg | Upper Arlington | Washington Township | Westerville | Worthington

See which businesses are taking the pledge or learn how you can get involved by visiting

[https://www.franklinswcd.org/water-quality-partner-program](http://www.franklinswcd.org/water-quality-partner-program)

## BMP Review: Tracking Controls & Construction Entrances

A BMP is a Best Management Practice used to manage or prevent stormwater runoff during active construction.

A construction entrance is used to reduce the amount of mud tracked off-site by construction traffic and must be installed where construction traffic leaves active construction areas and enters public roadways or areas unchecked by effective sediment controls. It is also needed where frequent vehicle and equipment access is expected and likely to contribute sediment to runoff, such as at the entrance to individual building lots.



Geotextile helps prevent the stone layer from sinking into the ground.



This construction entrance has added a rumble strip for additional debris collection.

1. **Proper installation requires a geotextile fabric** and good drainage to ensure construction site runoff does not leave the site. The use of geotextiles under the stone helps to prevent potholes from developing and will save the amount of stone needed during the life of the practice.
2. **Entrances must be installed as soon as is practicable before major grading activities commence.** The entrance should be at least 12-feet wide, with #2 stone at a depth of at least 6-inches (10-inches deep for heavy use). The entrance should be at least 30 feet long at single residence lots and not less than 70-feet at a main entrance for sites disturbing 1-acre+.
3. **Entrances should not be the only practice relied on** to manage off-site tracking as most mud is flung from tires as they reach higher speeds. **Restricting traffic to stabilized construction roads, stone entrances and away from muddy areas is also necessary.**
4. **Wheel wash stations** may be necessary if a construction entrance is not sufficient to remove the majority of mud from wheels or there is an especially sensitive traffic situation on adjacent roads. **Wash water must be contained, collected, and treated before discharging.**
5. **Check entrances at the end of each day** and when dirt and mud are tracked onto roadways, it is important that you have a plan ready to go. When possible, use brooms, sweeper attachments, and vac trucks to clean roadways, as dozer buckets can cause damage to the road surface.
6. **ALL ENTRANCES NEED MAINTAINED.** Over time, **sediment will accumulate in the stone and reduce effectiveness of any construction entrance.** **Routinely** remove accumulation and **periodically** rework and/or top dress with additional stone.

### Tracking Quick Tip

Everyone that visits a construction site plays a role in site compliance, and no matter what you are driving or the reason for your visit it is important to utilize designated access roads and parking areas to help limit the amount of maintenance the superintendent has to do to keep roadways clean and safe.

If you can't avoid driving through muddy areas or you underestimate soil conditions (like I recently did), check your tires before leaving a site and scrape excess material off. I keep an old ice scraper in my work vehicle for cleaning boots (and tires) when needed.



Remember, just because you can get somewhere in a vehicle doesn't mean you should.

For additional information refer to Chapter 5.2 of the Rainwater and Land Development Manual at [https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/epa.ohio.gov/Portals/35/storm/technical\\_assistance/5.2\\_Constr\\_Entrance\\_Stab.pdf](https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/epa.ohio.gov/Portals/35/storm/technical_assistance/5.2_Constr_Entrance_Stab.pdf)

The [Rainwater and Land Development Manual](#) is currently being updated, with some new sections planned that will relate to construction entrances. Keep an eye out for updates when **Section 4.5 - Vehicle Trackout Control** and **Section 5.3 - Heavy Use Area Stabilization** are finalized and published.

## SCP Review: Checking in on Maintenance

A SCP is a *Stormwater Control Practice* used to manage stormwater runoff long-term.

In this section, we look to highlight stormwater practices, maintenance considerations, and regulatory updates to assist those that own or help maintain these systems. **For this issue, we wanted to review the basics for private owners.**

**What is a Stormwater Control Practice?** The term “Stormwater Control Practice,” or SCP, refers to the permanent stormwater practices installed during construction to control post construction runoff and prevent or reduce the amount of pollution generated by non-point sources.

**What is non-point source pollution?** Sources of non-point pollution include sediment, nutrients, motor oil, and lawn care products that run off hard surfaces and yards into storm drains, which typically empty into nearby streams. A variety of local, state and federal laws encourage or require the control of non-point source pollutants.

**Do you have a SCP on your property or in your neighborhood?** Ponds, ditches and depressions that you see every day may actually be engineered stormwater facilities designed to reduce flooding and improve water quality.

Some of the more common, **Structural SCPs** found throughout Franklin County include:

- Ponds (Wet & Dry)
- On-lot Storage
- Orifice Plates
- Bioretention Basins
- Underground Detention
- Water Quality Units
- Filter Strips, Swales & Trenches
- Pervious Pavement

No matter the type of SCP, routine maintenance is needed to sustain effectiveness and ensure long-term environmental benefits.

**Who is responsible for inspection & maintenance?** While some communities may accept residential SCPs into their existing maintenance programs, **responsibility usually falls to the property owner.**

Your local government may conduct period inspections and/or request annual documentation showing proof that routine inspections and any required maintenance activities have been performed on your SCPs.

**What maintenance activities are needed?** Maintenance activities will obviously vary according to the specific SCP and site conditions, but some examples are listed below.

### Routine Activities (\$)

- Repairing erosion
- Removing debris & litter
- Clearing clogged structures
- Managing vegetation
- Removing sediment

### Non-Routine Activities (\$\$\$\$)

- Repairing/replacing structures
- Replacing plants, mulch or filter media
- Dam repairs/reconstruction
- Dredging

**Extend the life of your SCPs** by looking for ways to reduce the sediment and pollutants that reach them. Consider implementing a street sweeping schedule or install pre-treatment practices, rain gardens or vegetated buffers. Educate residents and employees on how their actions matter and encourage actions like picking up after pets and fixing car leaks.



You can find more resources at [www.franklinswcd.org/urban-conservation](http://www.franklinswcd.org/urban-conservation).

The City of Columbus created a [maintenance manual](#) that includes fact sheets and inspection forms.

If you are unsure if you have a maintenance agreement, call your local government contact for assistance.

## Save the Date! October 1-7, 2026 9th Annual Stormwater Awareness Week



**Clean Streams  
Start HERE**



Find updates in future issues of *The Urban Review* & online  
<https://www.franklinswcd.org/stormwater-week>

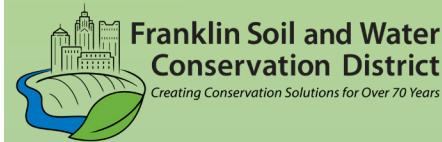


**Waves of the Watershed (2025)** | Have you seen the newest pump station mural?

In partnership with FLOW (Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed), Columbus Water & Power has commissioned murals on two pump stations along the Olentangy Bike Trail. Designed by local artists, these works reflect the unique ecology and culture of the Olentangy Watershed while celebrating the community's relationship with water. [Learn more here!](#)



Artist: [Andy Clarkson](#)  
 Location: 808 Dublin Rd Columbus, OH 43215  
 (on the Olentangy Bike Trail, across from Lower.com Field.)



1404 Goodale Boulevard, Suite 100

Columbus, Ohio 43212

[www.franklinswcd.org](http://www.franklinswcd.org)

614.486.9613

*District programs and services are offered on a non-discriminatory basis.*

There are many ways that residents, businesses and local governments in central Ohio support the mission of Franklin Soil and Water.

The partner communities below help us provide outreach to the development community throughout the year and assist us in promoting responsible land use decisions for the conservation, protection and improvement of our soil and water resources. **Thank you!**

- City of Canal Winchester
- City of Columbus
- City of Dublin
- Franklin County Board of Commissioners
- City of Gahanna
- City of Grove City
- City of Hilliard
- City of New Albany
- City of Obetz
- City of Reynoldsburg
- City of Upper Arlington
- City of Westerville
- City of Worthington

### SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Franklin Soil and Water hosts multiple events throughout the year which benefit the protection and improvement of soil and water resources. We are currently accepting sponsorships that will help support our Urban Program Outreach Events.

Sponsorships of \$500 or more will be recognized as supporting all of our 2026 Urban Program Outreach Events, and sponsorships received by March 31st will be recognized in our next Urban Review!

Learn more about the different [sponsorship levels and benefits here!](#)  
 E-mail [Brooke](#) with any questions.