

# Frankly Speaking

Autumn 2025

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District

Frankly Speaking, Volume 79 Issue 2  
www.franklinswcd.org



## You're Invited to our 2025 Annual Meeting

*Celebrating Conservation Along Big Darby Creek*

**Thursday, September 11<sup>th</sup>**  
**3:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.**

Enjoy sandwiches, networking, and tours  
at our Hellbranch Meadows Restoration  
Project- [Register Now!](#)

800 Murnan Road, Columbus, OH 43119

Big Darby Creek is the highest quality and most biodiverse of Central Ohio's five main waterways. Because of this, its tributaries have been the target of many restoration initiatives in recent years. This year's annual meeting will take place in our restoration project, which has been transformed from a farm field and ditch into a functioning tributary with wetlands and extensive native plantings. Join us to learn more about conservation in this unique and incredible watershed! More details on page 7.

### Board of Supervisors' Election

Two candidates are running for  
one open seat.

In-person and absentee voting at  
our office  
September 11 - October 10

Note there will be no in-person  
voting available at our annual  
meeting.

### Fieldstone Stream Restoration Highlights Benefits of Improving Urban Streams

Close your eyes for a moment and picture a stream. Did you imagine a large, pristine waterway surrounded by tall old trees in a soundscape dominated by rippling water and singing birds? Those are certainly ideal conditions for a healthy stream, but here in Franklin County the truth is our streams have had to adapt to human landscapes



## Fieldstone Stream Restoration (*continued*)

where you are often more likely to hear a car driving than a bird fluttering, and can see more blades of turfgrass than leaves of trees.

Even when they're not in peak ecological shape, our streams are an important part of our daily lives. When we turn on the tap or step out the door onto dry ground, we can thank a stream for carrying water away from buildings and structures, and to a drinking water treatment facility. In between where rain falls and where rivers begin are ditches and streams, providing the mentioned services in addition to being habitat where everything from plankton to dragonflies and tiny fish to large wading birds make their homes.

One such stream occurs in Fieldstone housing development in Jefferson Township. Historical aerial photography indicated the stream once possessed a natural sinuous channel, but became more of a ditch when the land became an agricultural area. In what was once a common practice, the stream was straightened and channelized by 1989 so that water would move off of the farm field faster to reduce pooling and mud that could affect crop growth and tractor maneuverability. But as farmland was replaced with neighborhoods with more roofs and roads, and even more neighborhoods were constructed downstream, the ditch became a liability. The faster moving larger volumes of water were contributing to erosion and flooding issues downstream, and the ditch was having trouble accommodating the increased runoff from impervious surfaces. With no floodplain, the water was spilling over into residential yards and approaching people's homes.



*Restoring deep, channelized streams in residential areas to shallower, more sinuous waterways creates more habitat for wildlife, while also creating better, more accessible areas for young explorers.*



FSWCD and Jefferson Township targeted the problematic ditch for restoration to address both the erosion and flooding issues, as well as to improve water quality and habitat. FSWCD contracted with Oxbow Stream and River Restoration to move the channelized stream away from affected homes, and restore its bends and curves, a process that creates habitat and reduces erosion pressure. A large riparian floodplain zone was also constructed to reduce downstream flood pressure. Additionally, constructed riffles and streamside native plantings aim to reduce sediment and nutrient levels in the stream.



Both wildlife and residents were quick to notice the change. Riffle-dependent Orangethroat Darters have taken up residence in the stream, and Green Herons now have shallow enough water to hunt in. Once deep, and inaccessible, the shallower stream is also much more inviting to young residents! This project is an important example of using green infrastructure projects to make our communities more resilient to Central Ohio's increasing rainfall while improving water quality and wildlife habitat.

# Franklin SWCD News

## Community Backyards Program Breaks Record

This year was a big year for Community Backyards. First, we launched a brand-new, interactive online course built by our outreach team. Then, we broke our all-time record for Community Backyards participation! We have had over **3,200** residents participate in the online or in-person course. Additionally, we have already issued over **\$91,000** in rebates to residents, and the season isn't done yet. Thank you all for your support and participation over the years!



## Urban Agriculture Program Expands in Second Year

The District, in partnership with Franklin County Commissioners, offered the Urban Agriculture Critical Infrastructure Grant for the second year this year, awarding \$285,000 to farms less than 5 acres. Additionally, FSWCD received a grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts to provide Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) trainings, free soil tests and interpretation, and soil health workshops in partnership with Ohio State University Extension and NRCS.

### Awardees for 2025 were:

Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio  
 Bishop Griffin Resource Center  
 Community Development for All People  
 Community Organizing Center  
 Cooke Road Urban Farm  
 Dorothy England Legacy Farm  
 Feed Me Tomatoes  
 Gahanna Community Congregational Church  
 Southfield Community Veteran Outreach Garden  
 The Family Adolescent and Child  
 Community Engagement Service



Gooseberry Farm  
 Growth and Growing Collective  
 Harriet Gardens  
 Highland Youth Garden  
 Hodges Creative Works  
 South Side Family Farms  
 Killdeer Acres  
 Over the Fence Urban Farm  
 The Garden for All  
 The Hardy Center Inc  
 Three Creeks Produce  
 Upper Arlington Lutheran Church  
 Veritas Community Church  
 Vineyard Church  
 Vineyard Community Center

## Get Involved!



### **Stormwater Awareness Week is October 1-7!**

Stormwater Awareness Week has grown into a statewide effort that encourages communities, and the groups that care about them, to raise awareness of how rainwater moves through infrastructure and our environment and take action to prevent stormwater pollution. Ohio Stormwater Awareness Week will be taking place October 1-7, and to celebrate we will be working with partners to promote fun and educational events throughout the week. Learn more at [franklinswcd.org/stormwater-week](http://franklinswcd.org/stormwater-week).

Example actions might include (but are definitely not limited to):

- Participate in community or neighborhood clean-ups.
- Plant native trees & plants.
- Adopt a storm drain! Rake and sweep around it regularly.
- Construct or replant and maintain a rain garden.
- Mulch leaves on your grass to help soil conditions.
- Ask a local business to become a Water Quality Partner.
- Properly dispose of chemicals and hazardous waste.
- Don't Drip & Drive- Fix car leaks.
- Always pick up and throw away pet waste.
- Reduce winter salt usage.



### **Stormwater Awareness Week Featured Practice: Take the Stormwater Awareness Week Pledge!**

Beginning September 1, scan the code to the right to take our Stormwater Awareness Week pledge. Taking the pledge will not only give you great ideas for preventing stormwater pollution at your home or business, but also enter you into a drawing to win prizes like a rain barrel or a spill clean-up kit!

Taking the pledge means committing to simple action like keeping storm drains clear, reducing use of harmful chemicals, and properly disposing of waste that make a powerful impact on our environment.



## Become a Master Rain Gardener

The Master Rain Gardener program is a certification course that trains residents to build their own rain garden throughout a 5-week series of classes, field trips, and design feedback. Experienced instructors provide customized feedback which will enable students to design and install a rain garden. Topics will include site assessment, soil analysis, design, construction, plant selection, and maintenance. The Master Rain Gardener program was initially developed in Washtenaw County, Michigan, and has been adapted around Ohio and even Canada, resulting in valuable rain gardens, and engaged advocates. Register at [franklinswcd.org/master-rain-gardener](http://franklinswcd.org/master-rain-gardener).



## Receive our Volunteer Newsletter

FSWCD is pleased to offer several volunteer opportunities throughout the year. We produce a monthly listing of Central Ohio conservation events that include events by FSWCD and partner agencies that are doing work in line with our mission of protecting Franklin County's natural resources. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, sign up at [franklinswcd.org/volunteer-opportunities](http://franklinswcd.org/volunteer-opportunities). You will receive a monthly digest of volunteer opportunities from the District and other Central Ohio conservation agencies!



## Annual Milkweed Collection

You can help save the declining Monarch butterfly! The [Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative](#) and Franklin SWCD are calling on Ohioans to help monarch migration by collecting Milkweed pods to be used in statewide habitat restoration projects! Keep an eye on our website and social media channels for official dates dependent on how the weather affects seed formation! Generally drop off is in September and October



- It's best to collect the pods when they are **dry, grey, or brown**. It is important to check this. If the center seam pops with gentle pressure, they can be harvested.
- Store the pods in paper bags; plastic bags collect unwanted moisture.
- Keep the pods in a cool, dry area until you can deliver them to the nearest collection site. We will have a collection bin outside our office!
- Leave some pods (10-25%) on the plants so that seeds have a chance to naturally disperse and do their job as an important food source for milkweed bugs and other critters.



# 2025 Board of Supervisors' Election

Get to know the candidates! Find complete information about the election on our website:

[www.franklinswcd.org/board-of-supervisors-election](http://www.franklinswcd.org/board-of-supervisors-election)

In Ohio, Soil and Water Conservation Districts are administered by a board of five supervisors. Supervisors are elected to three-year terms in public elections conducted by the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission. Supervisors volunteer their time, energy and expertise. Our Board of Supervisors' public election will be open for absentee ballot submission, and in-office voting weekdays 8:30am-4:30pm starting September 11 until October 10, 2025.

Due to unforeseen circumstances our 2025 Board of Supervisors Election is an unopposed election. Residents are still welcome to vote even though there is only one candidate running for a single seat.



***Erin Miller***

Erin Miller is the Assistant Vice President of Energy Policy and Sustainability for American Municipal Power (AMP). Erin has been with AMP since 2017. In this role, she spearheads the organization's sustainability programs, manages the member-led Focus Forward initiative and associated electric vehicle sub-group, manages the organization's grant services program, and tracks renewable energy policies at the state and federal level.

Previously, Miller served as the Environmental Steward with the City of Columbus for nearly eight years. In that role, she managed programs such as the Branch Out Columbus tree initiative, the GreenSpot program, and RecyColumbus. She has also occupied various positions with the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), including Director of the Center for Energy and Environment as well as Greenways Program Manager, where she coordinated with various organizations and agencies to develop and implement the Greenways Program and Greenways: A Plan for Franklin County. Prior to MORPC, Erin served as the Executive Director of the Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW).

She holds a bachelor's degree in ecology and environmental sciences from Otterbein University, has completed the Ohio Environmental Leaders Institute at the Ohio State University and also has attained the designation of LEED® Green Associate™ from Green Business Certification Inc.

Miller currently serves on the American Public Power Association Smart Energy Provider Panel; the Smart Electric Power Alliance Program Advisory Committee; and the Large Public Power Council Emerging Trends Task Force.

# 2025 Annual Meeting Registration

You may also register online: [franklinswcd.org/annual-meeting](http://franklinswcd.org/annual-meeting)



Join us for our 79<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and Board of Supervisors' Election, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at our Hellbranch Meadows Conservation Project. The event is free and open to all partners, communities and residents so we can "Celebrate Conservation Along Big Darby Creek!" The evening will include networking, food, tours and a hot air balloon if the weather is nice. In the event of inclement weather, the event will take place at Prairie Township Community Center at 5955 W Broad St, Galloway, OH 43119.

*Don't miss the opportunity to see our wetland restoration from a bird's eye view!*

## **Celebrating Conservation Along Big Darby Creek**

**September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025 from 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**

**Hellbranch Meadows Restoration Project • 800 Murnan Road Galloway, Ohio 43119**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tickets are free! Please indicate which attendees besides yourself will be in your party below.**

Additional Guests Attending:

\_\_\_\_\_

Please mail by September 3<sup>rd</sup> or call our office at 614-486-9613

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District  
1404 Goodale Blvd., Suite 100  
Columbus, Oh 43212

If you are interested in sponsoring our Annual Meeting, contact our office at (614) 486-9613 or visit [franklinswcd.org/products/category/sponsorships](http://franklinswcd.org/products/category/sponsorships).



## Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District

*Creating Conservation Solutions for Over 70 Years*

1404 Goodale Blvd., Suite 100  
Columbus, Ohio 43212  
(614) 486-9613 • [franklinswcd.org](http://franklinswcd.org)

NON-PROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
COLUMBUS, OH  
PERMIT NO. 1568

---

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

August 2025

Frankly Speaking

*Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District*

## Board of Supervisors

Jessica D'Ambrosio, Chair  
Leigh Anne Ward, Vice Chair  
Erin Miller, Treasurer  
Kim Landsbergen, Secretary  
Lydia Cumming

## Management

Jennifer Fish, Director  
Kyle Wilson, Assistant Director  
Josh Garver, GIS and Special Projects  
Director  
Aaron Hebert, GIS Manager

### Connect With Us



1404 Goodale Blvd. Suite 100  
Columbus, OH 43212  
(614) 486-9613  
[franklinswcd.org](http://franklinswcd.org)



[facebook.com/franklinsoilandwater](https://facebook.com/franklinsoilandwater)



@franklinsoilandwater



[Franklin Soil and Water  
Conservation District](#)



@franklinsoilandwater

Would you rather receive this newsletter electronically? Sign up for E-Frankly Speaking and send an e-mail with the subject line "Cancel mail Frankly Speaking" with the full name of the recipient above to [ksedmak@franklinswcd.org](mailto:ksedmak@franklinswcd.org) to update your subscription.