



WATERSHED NEWS

Sandusky River Watershed Coalition

Volume 4, Issue 1

March 6, 2006

Two-Day Workshop To Focus on Sandusky River

Do the Sandusky River and its tributaries support good fish populations and provide safe sources of drinking water and recreational opportunities? Do our streams deliver excessive loads of sediments, nutrients and pesticides to Sandusky Bay and Lake Erie? How do our agricultural and urban land uses impact our water resources? What kind of measures could we adopt to minimize adverse impacts of land use on our waters? Are these measures practical? ... acceptable to land owners? ... affordable? What sources of financial support and what organizations are available to help land owners/operators adopt these measures? Will adoption of these measures achieve desired environmental goals?

If you are interested in

answers to any of the above questions, if you think that those answers may affect you, or if you want to help answer those questions, then plan to attend a two-day workshop sponsored by the Coalition and National Center for Water Quality Research at Heidelberg College. The workshop is scheduled for June 27 and 28, 2006 and will be held on the Heidelberg Campus in Tiffin.

The workshop will provide attendees with opportunities to hear from – and question – staff from local and state agencies, academic researchers and educators, and private practitioners who are in the best position to answer the above questions.

The Coalition’s workshop subcommittee is in the final stages of organizing the program and contacting speak-

ers. A workshop brochure will be prepared, distributed and posted on the Coalition’s website. Early registration for the conference will help the workshop committee in its planning for local arrangements.

The workshop is being supported by grants from the National Machinery Foundation of Tiffin and the Ohio Lake Erie Protection Fund.

If you have questions about the workshop contact Dave Baker at Heidelberg (419 448-2914 or dbaker@heidelberg.edu) or Chris Riddle (419 334-5016 or cmriddle@wsos.org).

-Dave Baker, PhD—
Chair, Stream Flow & Habitat Committee

Special points of interest:

- *A June 5 river cleanup has been scheduled by ODNR in Fremont. The evening cleanup will begin at 6:30pm. Details are now on the website.*
- *Planning is under way for our next membership meeting later this spring. Details will be sent your way soon.*
- *The Honey Creek WAP has been resubmitted for State review and endorsement.*
- *The SR-Tiffin WAP is well on its way to becoming a full initial draft. Information on public meetings will be released soon.*

Watershed Coordinator Grants Offered in 2006

For the past year the State of Ohio has been reviewing the Watershed Coordinator Program in preparation for a new round of funding opportunities in 2006. One of the biggest questions surrounded the ability for expiring grant recipients to reapply for funding. The Sandusky River Watershed Coalition was one of the first year recipients of the Coordinator Grant, nearly 6 years ago, and our eligibility for continued funding hung in

the balance.

The Coalition was heavily involved in the State’s review process, and all that hard work is paying off. A May deadline has been set for applications for continued funding. The Coalition will be eligible for up to 3 years of additional state support through this grant program. Of course, we are not guaranteed funding, so we are not celebrating too much yet. While the opportunity is a

great victory for our membership, there is still much work to be done. As well, local support from both agencies and individuals will play a key role in our application for this continued funding. The steady increase in membership contributions we are experiencing this year is just one of the many factors that will help us be competitive for funding. Additional details on the grant program and our membership drive are inside.

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A Message from the Wastewater Committee

- Kate Siefert, R.S., Wastewater Committee Chair

For a little over a year now, the wastewater committee members (headed up by Registered Sanitarians from the local health departments within the Sandusky River watershed) have been happily distributing cost share funds to homeowners through an Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) S.319 grant for replacing or repairing failing household sewage treatment systems in select areas in all five counties (Crawford, Erie, Sandusky, Seneca & Wyandot).

The grant provides 50% or more cost share, up to \$4,000 for a conventional system and up to \$6,000 for an alternative type system paid directly to the installer. This grant has already allocated over \$212,000 to 57 homeowners in the watershed. The goal of the grant is to replace or repair a total of 169 household sewage treatment systems by the end of the grant – meaning we still have a lot more of OEPA's money to distribute to a lot more homeowners during the next 18 months!

A typical septic system is comprised of a two compartment septic tank (the primary component) followed by a distribution box followed by a leach field (the secondary treatment component). The tank essentially provides the role of receiving all of the waste from a household and allowing the solids to settle to the bottom. The liquids exit the tank to the distribution box where it is directed into the leach lines of the leach field. The leach field is the component that provides the removal of bacteria and viruses from the wastewater by evenly distributing the wastewater in shallow, buried trenches that allow for downward movement of the liquid through the soil.

A conventional septic tank does not provide treatment of the wastewater and will, in time, build up with solids, paper, and greases/fats if not pumped on a regular basis. Typically a septic tank should be pumped by a registered septage hauler every three to five years (depending on

the size of your tank and size of your household). When visually examining a septic tank by removing the risers over the inlet and outlet pipes, you should see a foamy scum layer floating on top of the liquids. If you can see the buildup of solids or toilet paper instead of foam, it is time to have your tank pumped. Your local health department can provide you with a list of septage haulers in your area.

The Ohio Department of Health is in the process of adopting new household sewage treatment system regulations later this year that will change the current regulations that govern all local health departments. While we can not state with certainty what the new regulations will require, the draft regulations proposed and in review indicate that the soils of Northwest Ohio will limit our options. We will most likely begin to see more systems comprised of either aeration treatment of wastewater prior to reaching the leach field, biopeat filter systems prior to the leach field, or the installation of above ground secondary treatment systems (Ohio or Wisconsin Mound systems), or the installation of drip systems for pressure distribution of the wastewater on timed intervals through very shallow trenches.

The new regulations will also change our options for replacing and repairing existing household sewage treatment systems. Many existing

homes have a system that discharges treated wastewater into a field tile or into an open watercourse. The new regulations will require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit to be obtained whenever an alteration or repair takes place on a discharging system. Applications for this permit must be approved by Ohio EPA.

Later this year (May) is the proposed timeframe for having the regulations adopted by the State of Ohio, but an effective date has not been decided yet. Until the final rules are adopted, we will not know the full details of how these new regulations will affect us. It is hopeful that the new regulations will not become effective until January 1, 2007.

For more information on the OEPA S.319 grant for replacing your sewage treatment system, please contact your local health department or visit www.sanduskyriver.org to see if you live in an eligible area.



Installation of a new household sewage treatment system that received \$4,000 cost share from the OEPA S.319 grant.

Agricultural Self-Assessment Program

The Coalition has partnered with the Seneca SWCD to offer the Agricultural Environmental Self-Assessment Program this winter. Funded through an Ohio Environmental Education Fund Grant, the effort brings a local flavor to an Ohio Farm Bureau program.

Throughout February and into Early March, a series of 7 sessions were scheduled, with over 40 local producers taking part. Each session was capped at 9 or fewer participants to pilot various class sizes and determine the optimum situation. As of the press date, the final sessions were full and a waiting list was beginning to form.

Seneca SWCD has been fully committed to this project, helping with mailings to

producers, the development of the training materials and curriculum, and they have provided the staff to help host most of the sessions. It is our goal to open the registration process up to neighboring watershed counties next winter.

If you would like information on the project, or if you want to register, you can:

- Visit our website at www.sanduskyriver.org and click on

the Agriculture link.

- Contact the SRWC at 419-334-5016 or cmiddle@wsos.org
 - Contact Seneca SWCD at 419-447-7073.

Ohio Agricultural Environmental Assurance Alliance
Producer Self-Assessment Program



A special thank you goes out to Tia Rice, Seneca SWCD. Tia has been the driving force behind this program's success, guiding the process every step of the way.

Information on the Ohio Environmental Education Fund can be found on Ohio EPA's website.

Rural Drainage Advisory Committee

Rural drainage is an issue that almost no one talks about, but almost all of us rely on. Anyone who doesn't think that drainage is important to our area should probably turn off their sump pump for a few days and see how a soggy basement changes their views.

"Water, often up to the belly of a horse, stood on the surface until it evaporated in the hot summer months." -from a history of the Great Black Swamp

Despite the importance drainage has in our lives, many people know little to nothing about where their water goes, or how it gets there. Most rural home lots drain to tile mains. These large mains remove water from many acres of land. The problem arises when you consider that the majority of our tile mains are clay...they were installed over 100 years ago, were designed to carry much less flow than they currently handle, and are extremely expensive to replace.

Surface drainage, namely ditches, are equally as important to keeping our homes, businesses, and feet dry during much of the year. This rural drainage infrastructure is what allows us to live where we do...but like so many things, there is also a price to pay.

The two main impairments the Sandusky River Watershed faces are sediment and

the modification to stream flows. The modification of stream flows is, you guessed it, a symptom of the intensive drainage practices we have within the watershed. Be it urban industrial, rural residential, or agricultural, no one wants standing water on their property, and everyone relies on drainage ditches to help get rid of water. The practice of traditional ditching in Ohio is one that has few benefits for aquatic communities, it is a reality that we face every day. Our practices as they stand work well for drainage, but their impacts on aquatic communities are something that we cannot ignore.

As mentioned before, the demands on this aging system continue to rise, and today we find ourselves at a crossroads. Rural drainage systems, namely those 100+ year old tile mains, are beginning to break down across the state. Many of these breakdowns result in "blowouts" in fields. These gaping holes pull down tons of sediment and disrupt drainage in field after field. Many times, individuals in rural homes refuse to help pay the hefty cost of replacing these tile mains, often citing the age old excuse, "there isn't a problem on my prop-

erty, so I don't see that there is a problem at all."

To help deal with this plethora of issues—a failing drainage infrastructure, the impacts of drainage on stream flows, and the impacts of ditching on streams, the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources have formed a Rural Drainage Advisory Committee. Locally, staff from Seneca and Sandusky SWCD's have been asked to sit on this Committee. As well, I have been asked to take part as the representative for Ohio's Watershed Coordinators...quite an honor indeed. Northwest Ohio is well represented on the committee as a whole—a necessity when you consider our absolute reliance on drainage.

At this time we are hard at work, looking for strategies to help continue to have the drainage we so desperately need, to help rebuild our aging infrastructure, and while we are at it, find new ways to protect water quality across the state. The stakes are high and the issues demanding, but the dedication from all parties is equally as strong. I believe fully that over the next 6 months we can lay the foundation for a change that will both improve our drainage infrastructure and promote better water quality for all Ohioans.



Our Members—2006

Mink

City of Bucyrus
 City of Fremont
 City of Tiffin
 Crown Battery Manufacturing Co Inc.
 National Machinery Foundation

Small Mouth Bass

Crown Battery Manufacturing Co Inc.

Walleye

Arrowhead Farm
 Holman Aqua Drilling
 Pheasants Forever, Seneca Co.
 Sandusky County Park District
 Smith-Comesky Ground Water Science LLC
 Sonoco Products Company, PPD
 Winous Point Marsh Conservancy
 James & Marcia Bailey
 Dave & Peg Baker
 Ken & Deb Baker
 John & Susan Crumrine
 Richard & Lisa Dunn
 Don & Carolyn Miller
 Steve Mohr
 Brad & Susan Tanner
 Julie Ward
 Frederick Widman
 Dave & Bonnie Wolfe

Damselfly

Kerry Adkins
 Tom & Connie Fishbaugh
 George Fruth
 Nancy McKeen
 Roger Minier
 Scott & Joanne Riddle
 Tim & Joan Sacksteder
 Steve Smith
 Toni Wagner
 D.P. & Lynda Weininger
 Margaret Widman
 Roland & Carole Zimmerman
 Eyestone Flower Farm
 Friends of Minnow Creek
 Green Creek Wildlife Society
 Izaak Walton League, Tiffin-Seneca
 Sandusky County Farm Bureau
 Seneca Caverns
 Seneca County Farm Bureau
 Seneca Soil & Water Conservation District
 Village of New Washington

Sycamore

Clouse Construction Corp.
 Sandusky Co. Chamber of Commerce
 Sandusky County Commissioners
 Wyandot County Farm Bureau
 Carl & Mary Anne Koebel
 James & Dorothy Leslie
 Terry & Katie McKibben
 Joyce Morehart
 Josie Setzler
 James Welty
 Roger & Sandra Wise

Cooperating Affiliates:

Crawford County SWMD/Recycling
 Crawford County Soil & Water Conservation Dist.,
 Crawford County Health Department
 Crawford County Park District
 Erie County Health Department
 Erie County Soil & Water Conservation Dist.
 Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
 Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
 ODNR Division of Natural Areas & Preserves
 ODNR Division of Wildlife
 Ohio State University Extension
 Pheasants Forever
 Sandusky County Farm Bureau
 Sandusky County Health Department
 Sandusky County Park District
 Sandusky County Soil & Water Conservation Dist.
 Seneca County General Health District
 Seneca County Park District
 Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation Dist.
 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
 Wyandot County Commissioners
 Wyandot County Health Department
 Wyandot County Soil & Water Conservation Dist.
 Wyandot County Visitors & Conservation Bureau
Our cooperating affiliates are local and state entities that make a substantial in-kind contribution of their staff time.



Not on this list? Use the form on page 8 to renew your membership today!



From The Coordinator's Desk

For those of you whom read this on a regular basis, you are already fully aware of my battles with the sun. Each morning as I drive east on State Route 6, it is in front of me, and each evening on my way home, it is again in front of me. During the winter months it isn't so bad. The sun rises later, and much to the south, which helps. During the summer, ah, the summer, now that is a different story altogether.

As I sit here at home on a quiet evening, I find myself watching my dogs, weimaraners for those with an interest, play their own cat and mouse game. Whereas I spend my days trying to find the right combination of posture, sun visor, and sunglasses, they play a very different game. The main floor of my home is essentially a square, which allows Lola, the young antagonist, to steal off with a toy and put a few walls between her and Zoe, the obsessive compulsive tennis ball chaser. The way it usually works is once they are on opposite sides of the house, they begin walking back and forth in half circles, each freezing at the first sight of the other. Lola tends to lead the game, heading in a clockwise manner, with Zoe moving counterclockwise to meet her. At first site, Lola turns on her heels and heads back from whence she came, Zoe does the same. A few seconds later they come face to face and the process starts anew. Lola generally uses this game as a way to keep a toy from Zoe, who is quicker than Lola, but enjoys the chase enough to let it sometimes for as long as an hour.

Zoe and Lola's game seemed to me quite similar to my battles with the sun. Every morning from May through September I find myself trying to time my drive, rearrange myself in my seat, and lean at sometimes gravity-defying angles, trying to block out the blinding light. My primary goal in the mornings becomes less about driving and more about how I can know where the sun is, while never really looking at it. Lola spends many of her evenings trotting around the house, sneaking from place to place, often peeking just her head around corners as she tries to keep a tab on Zoe's whereabouts, without making too much direct eye contact.

This desire to keep tabs on something without ever looking it straight in the eye is not all that uncommon in our world. The odd part is, it seems that most of the time the thing we work so hard to avoid seeing, is ourselves.

Water quality impacts come from each and every one of us. No one is without blame. From the spring day when we put "just a wee bit extra" fertilizer on our lawns, to the septic tank that you know needs replaced, but just isn't a priority. Sure, its easier to point the finger at others, to ask them to change, but sometimes we need to look in the mirror and see just how we fair.

Personally, I'm trying to turn over a new leaf this spring. It isn't anything big, as those huge turnarounds we all try in early January never seem to pan out. No, I'm shooting for something a little bit smaller.

I've decided its time to take an inventory on what I could do better to help protect water

quality where I live, on my property.

Time to brace yourselves.

Believe it or not, I'm not perfect...I know, that's a tough one to swallow, but its true, I really do have flaws. There are things I do, or don't do, that have a negative impact on the water where I live. Maybe I should start making better use of the rain water that I currently let rush off in to the nearest storm drain. Maybe I should upgrade some of my water fixtures to more efficient models. Maybe I should get more active in my local community.

Who knows what I will decide I need to do, or what I will actually end up doing. The big key here is that I have spent part of the winter helping farmers take a good long look at how they affect the water quality (see pg 3). Perhaps its time I turned the looking glass the other way. Maybe I'll surprise myself...maybe I won't. Anyway, I want to challenge you to do the same. Take some time, look around your house, your yard, your car, your work. Think about how you interact with water on a daily basis. Make a list of the things you could do that would have the biggest impact on water quality. Then pick one, two, or maybe even three, and try them, Just for a bit. See how they work out. Maybe, just maybe you will find that you aren't perfect either...and maybe you'll find that improving water quality isn't so difficult, especially when it begins with the person you change the most...you.

Watershed Coordinator Grant Update

A lot of talk has been swirling around about the watershed coordinator grant and our potential for future funding. Here is a quick update based on what we now know (or think we know):

- The Coalition will be eligible for a 3-year continuation grant.
- The grant will pay up to \$35,000 a year, just over 1/3 of our annual budget.
- A local commitment, both in cash and in-kind contributions is required—the more you provide, the

higher you score.

- Partnerships and commitments of resources from partners (ie staff time for committees/technical work) are a part of the scoring process, and are essential to being funded.
- The grants are meant to help continue planning as well as foster implementation.
- Past successes will be a part of the scoring process.
- A commitment to work towards finding a more permanent funding struc-

ture is asked of all applicants.

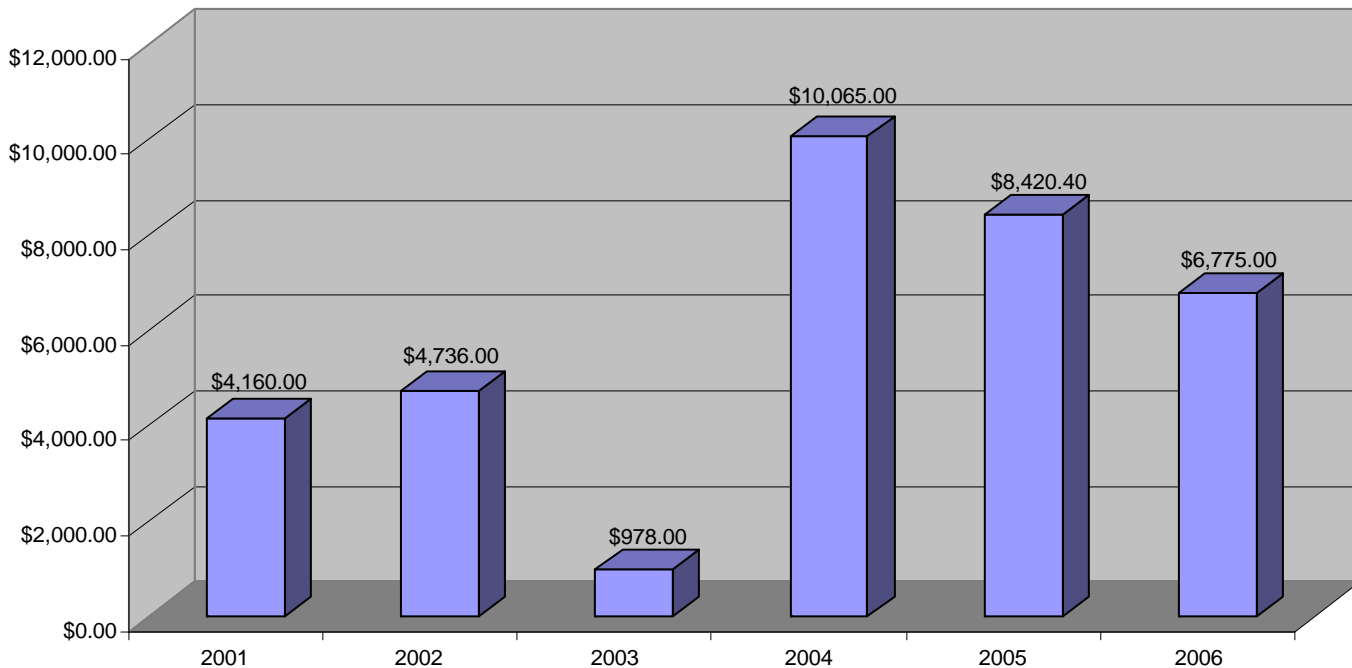
- Funding is provided on a competitive basis, including both the work done in the past as well as the work and partnerships laid out for the future.
- The turnover rate and reasons for coordinator resignations are a part of the scoring structure.

Based on what we have learned, we feel we have a very good chance at getting funded. We will be submitting an application soon, and will let everyone know the outcome once we hear from ODNR.



Total Donations Received—Year By Year

Annual Membership Donations



SANDUSKY RIVER WATERSHED COALITION 2006 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____ Organization: _____

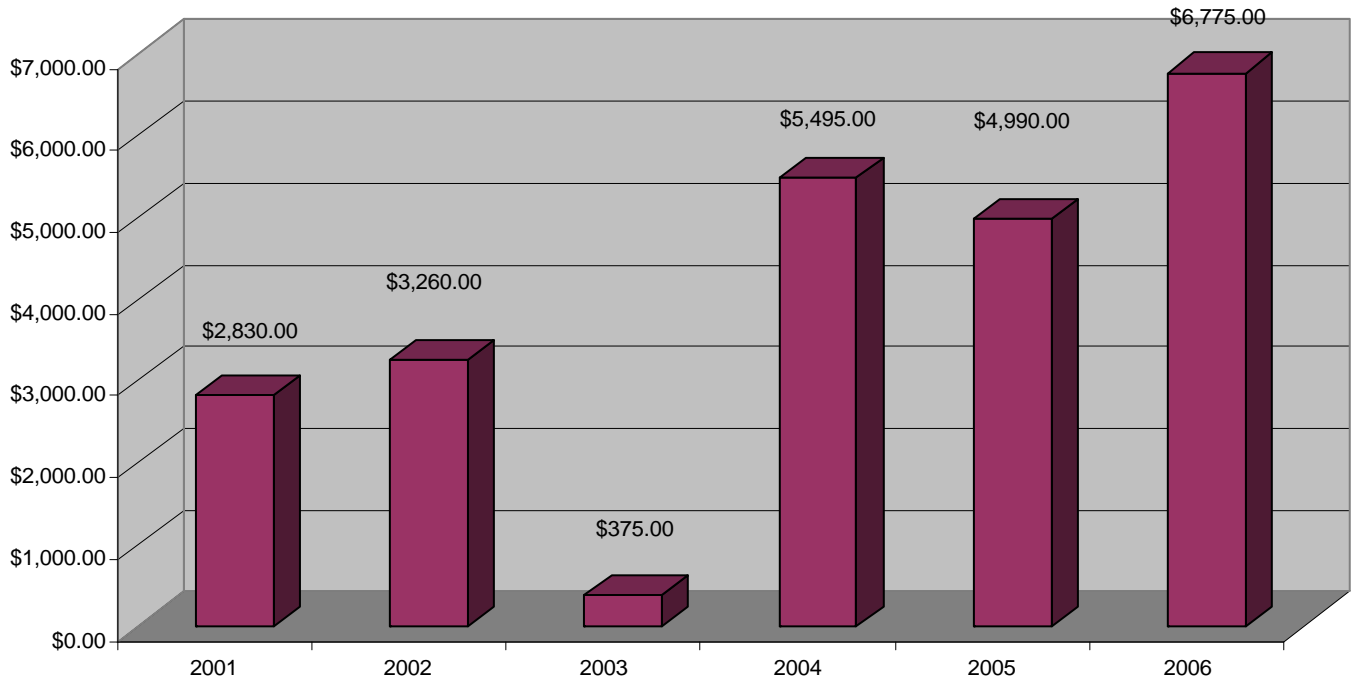
Address: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Donation Amount: \$ _____		
Level	Range	
<input type="radio"/> Sycamore	\$ 10 - 24	
<input type="radio"/> Damselfly	\$ 25 - 99	
<input type="radio"/> Walleye	\$ 100 - 499	
<input type="radio"/> Small Mouth Bass	\$ 500 - 999	
<input type="radio"/> Mink	\$ 1,000 - 2,499	
<input type="radio"/> Great Blue Heron	\$ 2,500 - 4,999	
<input type="radio"/> Bald Eagle	\$ 5,000 +	
<input type="radio"/> Volunteer Only	10 hrs. minimum	
<input type="radio"/> Youth Volunteer	No minimum	
<input type="radio"/> Partner Organization	Donation not permitted	
Make checks payable to: SRWC, c/o WSOS CAC Inc.		



Same Donors, Giving History



The graph above tracks the donations of our 2006 members over the past 6 years. Their annual donations have grown 240%.

A Quick Review of the Watershed Coordinator Program in Ohio

With all the talk of the new watershed coordinator grant program, perhaps a review of where the program has come from is important. A map of the watersheds that are covered is available on the state's website. The text below is also from the ODNR website: <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/soilandwater/watershedprograms.htm>

Twenty-nine watershed coordinators are working with several Ohio communities to develop watershed plans. These positions are made possible by Ohio's Watershed Coordinator Grants Program, which commenced in 2000, and provides salary and fringe (on a declining scale) to local governments and non-profits to support a watershed coordinator. Of the 29 grants awarded to date, 15 are to Soil and Water Conservation Districts, 12 are to non-profit organizations, and one is with a Park District. It is hoped that the local community will see a value in cleaner lakes, rivers and streams, and continue to support the watershed project in the future.

One of the first priorities of a watershed coordinator is to work with local stakeholders to develop a comprehensive watershed plan. The goal of the plan should be restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of stream segments within the watershed. Watershed groups may also address issues of local concern. The coordinators are also to develop and assist a local watershed group to implement a resource-focused education/information program in the watershed, and work towards making the water resource focused group more permanent.

Funding for the Watershed Grants Program is provided by the Division of Soil and Water Conservation, Division of Mineral Resources Management, Ohio's Coastal Management Program, and Section 319 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) Program, administered by OEPA. The Ohio nonpoint source water pollution (NPS) control program emphasizes education, technical assistance, financial incentives and voluntary actions as opposed to regulatory mandates or permits. The success of the Ohio NPS Program to date is attributed to the fact that it is based on innovation and voluntary compliance and involves a multitude of local, state and federal agencies working toward a common water quality goal.

**Sandusky River Watershed Coalition
2006 Membership form**

PO Box 590
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Phone: 419-334-5016
Fax: 419-334-5125
E-mail: cmiddle@wsos.org



Mailing Address Line 1
Mailing Address Line 2
Mailing Address Line 3
Mailing Address Line 4
Mailing Address Line 5



Working Together For Healthier Streams.

2006 Steam Quality Monitoring (SQM) Workshop Schedule for the Sandusky State Scenic River

Pre-registration is required for the SQM workshops, 419-981-6319

Wyandot County- Indian Mill Access, east side of river
Saturday April 22 at 10 am

Seneca County- St. Johns Bridge, west side of river
Saturday May 20 at 10 am

Sandusky County- Wolf Creek Park, canoe launch area
Saturday August 5 at 10 am
Saturday October 14 at 10 am

The Sandusky Scenic River Day will be held in Wyandot County this year on Saturday June 24 from 10 am to 2 pm. The event will involve a four mile, about 1.5 hours, canoe float from Indian Mill Access to Parker Covered Bridge. A Stream Qual-

ity Monitoring (SQM) demonstration will follow the canoe float. Pre-register with name, number attending, and phone number to the NW Ohio Scenic Rivers office at 419-981-6319. Since we only have adult life vests, children will need to bring their own vests. Indian Mill Access has restrooms and picnic tables, but no drinking water. The event is free and open to the public.



ISS012E15050

This photo of Sandusky Bay was taken Jan. 12, 2006 by an astronaut on the space station. The sediment laden waters of Sandusky Bay can be seen in contrast to Lake Erie (I know, its hard to see in B&W). Visit our website to see the color photo at full size.