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# Lake Views

MUSKINGUM  
WATERSHED  
CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

WINTER 2024 | VOLUME 43 - ISSUE 4

## Weather Extremes in 2024 Highlight Importance of MWCD

By Craig Butler, Executive Director

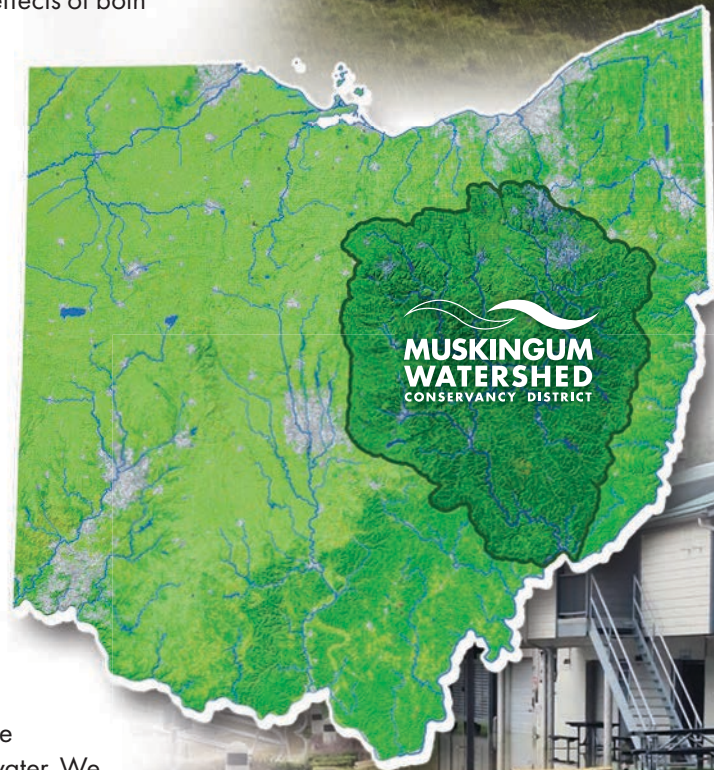
Seasonal changes—whether floods in spring, droughts in summer, or the frozen conditions of winter—pose challenges to water systems and the populations that depend on them. MWCD plays a pivotal role in managing these seasonal fluctuations, mitigating the effects of both floods and droughts, and preserving water resources across a vast region. Through our network of reservoirs, dams, and growing conservation efforts, MWCD helps protect local communities, manage water resources, and promote ecological sustainability.

Ohio's climate is characterized by a mixture of seasonal extremes. Winters often bring heavy snowfall, while spring can bring intense rainfall and the risk of flooding. In contrast, summer months may see extended dry spells or even droughts. The challenges posed by such seasonal variations—particularly the extremes of flooding and drought—require proactive management to protect lives, property, and the environment.

Flooding is a significant concern in many parts of Ohio. MWCD was established to control and regulate the flow of water across the Muskingum River Basin, which covers 8,000 square miles in eastern and central Ohio. Our network of 16 dams and reservoirs regulates river flow, stores excess rainwater during heavy storms, and slowly releases water during drier periods. By managing the flow of the Muskingum River and its tributaries, we reduce the risk of destructive flooding, protect downstream communities, and maintain water levels for recreation and wildlife.

The engineering marvel of MWCD's flood control infrastructure has proven invaluable in mitigating flood risks. When heavy rains saturate the region, the dams and reservoirs serve as buffers, temporarily storing large amounts of water. We work alongside the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to gradually release water to prevent downstream flooding. These flood control efforts have not only saved lives and prevented property damage, but also contributed significantly to the region's economic stability by protecting farmland and infrastructure.

This year started off with a flooding challenge for the region. We experienced intense and sustained rainfall in April and May that caused the region to rely on our flood mitigation capabilities. We watched with intensity as water filled our reservoirs and, in some cases, caused localized flooding that impacted our operations, and damaged homes and businesses.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



# MWCD's Commitment to Flood Mitigation Through Partners in Watershed Management Programs

By Dave Lautenschleger, Chief of Engineering

During the spring of 2024, MWCD hosted four flood mitigation focus groups. These took place in locations around the watershed – Marietta (Washington County), New Philadelphia (Tuscarawas County), Charles Mills Lake Park (Richland and Ashland Counties), and Newark (Licking County). Invitations were distributed to a diverse group of governmental and nonprofit partners.

The idea was simple: How can MWCD assist with small-scale flooding issues? The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers addresses large-scale flooding; however, many more minor localized flooding issues need attention and can be solved with the correct approach.

We held break-out sessions and asked the following questions:

- *Where is flooding currently taking place in the communities where you work – and do you know what is the cause of the flooding?*
- *What are the current sources of funding for your flood mitigation, resilience, and planning projects?*
- *What are the top unmet needs and gaps, including projects you have trouble funding?*
- *What recommendations do you have for us around flood mitigation moving forward?*

The results were collected and will be released in our Flood Mitigation Focus Group Summary Report in the coming weeks. Participants identified over 80 organizations and institutions to strengthen or expand collaboration. In addition to identifying local concerns, we can use this information to modify our existing Partners in Watershed Management (PWM) program.

## **PWM Applications Review**

As we head into the end of the year, we closely evaluate our PWM applications. Eligible candidates are political subdivisions of the state, IRS Section 501 groups, and other organizations involved in programs or projects related to watershed management and water quality improvements in the Muskingum River Watershed. We first review the application, ensure it fits the MWCD's mission, and supports the work of agencies and groups involved in conservation programs, water quality issues, and flood reduction and mitigation projects. We then assist local communities, agencies, and groups involved in projects and programs that support the conservation and flood control aspects of MWCD's mission.

So how did we do this year? In this grant cycle, we received twenty complete applications totaling over \$2.6 million

for funding assistance. The full project costs were nearly \$5.4 million, giving us a 2:1 ratio. All applications were initially reviewed by MWCD staff, and eligible and appropriate applications underwent an independent technical review. This year's applicants proved to be one of our more diverse groups. Projects ranged from land acquisition to protect waterways, equipment for water quality testing, a no-till seeder, to traditional green infrastructure projects.

This is the fifteenth year of the PWM program, and the word has definitely spread. We anticipate yet another successful year in 2025 with numerous improvements to the PWM process, updates to the website, funding, and innovative green infrastructure guidance.



## Weather Extremes Cont.

Although this damage across the region totaled millions of dollars, our reservoirs functioned exactly as planned.

While flooding is a major concern, drought conditions also pose their own set of challenges. Extended periods of dry weather can deplete water supplies and lower reservoir levels.

Our reservoirs store tens of billions of gallons of water ensuring that water supplies are available across the region to support aquatic ecosystems, agriculture, industry, and municipalities.

2024 also brought drought conditions to the region. Soon after the flooding ceded in the spring, it simply stopped raining. Even though we have seen some sporadic rainfall across the District this fall, the region is still in a historic condition of drought that will likely only be mitigated by significant winter precipitation.

As we monitored the drought conditions and receding lake levels, we were mindful of how complicated recreation operations are at our lakes, marinas, and boat ramps. Low water levels necessitated changes in our operations to ensure our mission of supporting recreation, agriculture, and industry were balanced. As is expected, when situations like this drive operational changes, it brings concerns from our users. With careful planning and communication, we were able to adapt and move forward.

In an era of increasing climate volatility, the role of MWCD has never been more important. Rising temperatures, erratic precipitation patterns, and more extreme weather events are expected to intensify the challenges of flood control and drought management. MWCD's extensive infrastructure of dams and reservoirs provides a robust foundation for adapting to these changes.

To meet these challenges, MWCD is involved in ongoing environmental conservation efforts. The organization works not only to manage water resources but also to protect the surrounding ecosystems through responsible land use, habitat restoration, and water quality improvement initiatives. By maintaining healthy forests, wetlands, and riparian zones, MWCD helps to improve water filtration, reduce erosion, and support biodiversity—all critical components of a resilient watershed.

Additionally, MWCD engages in public education and outreach, helping local communities better understand the importance of sustainable water practices and flood preparation. This outreach includes everything from conservation tips to disaster preparedness, ensuring that residents are informed and ready to respond to seasonal changes.

Lastly, I will mention how we are also retooling our Partners in Watershed

Management (PWM) program to adapt to the changing nature of rainfall and flooding across the region. We met with stakeholders after the floods in the spring to gather information about where MWCD could do more to assist communities with flood mitigation. We gained critical information that will help us tailor our programs and investments to be a funding and force multiplier across the region.

Yes, 2024 was interesting. The seasons marked both historic flooding and drought. In both big and small ways, we are proud to say that we play a critical role in the ongoing effort to manage the seasonal fluctuations that impact Ohio's water resources. Through our network of reservoirs, dams, and conservation initiatives, we provide essential flood mitigation, ensure adequate water supply during droughts, and help protect both the environment and the communities that rely on the watershed. As the climate continues to change, MWCD's adaptive management strategies will be key to sustaining the balance between water availability and environmental preservation, ensuring a resilient future for Ohio's communities and ecosystems alike.

**Below: Firefighters work to contain a brush fire at MWCD property in the Mohawk Dam region. Drought conditions caused the State of Ohio to issue burn bans throughout most of the state.**



# New Amenities Coming to Tappan Lake Park in 2025

MWCD is excited about the installation of a brand-new pump track, set to open in spring 2025 at Tappan Lake Park. This new addition will cater to outdoor enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels, offering a fun, challenging, and safe environment for biking, skateboarding, rollerblading, and scootering. The pump track will be located near the park’s popular swim beach, with easy access to other amenities, including scenic hiking trails and picnic areas.

This new track is part of the park’s ongoing commitment to expand recreational offerings and provide exciting outdoor activities for both residents and park visitors. A pump track is a circular trail designed with a series of rollers, banked turns, and smooth terrain, allowing riders to navigate the course without pedaling, using body movements to maintain momentum. Riders of all skill levels – from beginners to experienced athletes – will enjoy this thrilling addition.

“We’re excited to offer a new outdoor attraction that encourages active recreation for individuals and families,” said Pete Novotny, MWCD Chief of Recreation. “The pump track is designed to be inclusive, so whether you’re new to riding or an experienced pro, you’ll find something fun and challenging.”

Along with the pump track, additional amenities are planned at the park entrance to complement the recently opened Welcome Center including a new shelter and firepit area perfect for gatherings and events, along with scenic walking paths through wildflowers. For guests seeking active recreation, the area will feature a variety of new amenities: a basketball court, two pickleball courts, and outdoor lawn games like

concrete corn hole and table tennis. Additionally, a dedicated gaga ball area invites group-play for visitors of all ages. A new playground will further enhance family-friendly activities, complete with climbing rocks, swings, creative play structures, and shaded seating areas to relax and enjoy the natural surroundings.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony is planned for the grand opening in spring 2025, with activities and events to be announced closer to the date. Tappan Lake Park invites the community to stay tuned for updates and to visit the park year-round for a variety of recreational activities.



# MWCD is Once Again Recognized for Marketing Excellence



This October, MWCD received recognition for achievement in marketing and advertising at the Ohio Travel Association's RUBY Awards presentation. MWCD received a RUBY award for Spirit of Community for the Capture the Canvas program. Citations of Excellence were also awarded to the 2023 Annual Report, Digital Marketing Campaign, and Event Campaign. Accepting the awards were Adria Bergeron, director of marketing and communications; Ethan Zucal, public affairs and safety manager; and Logan Phillips, digital media coordinator.

The Ohio Travel Association's RUBY Awards recognize excellence in Ohio's hospitality and tourism industry for efforts in advertising, marketing, and public relations. In this year's competition, the Recognizing Uncommon Brilliance Yearly

(RUBY) Awards had 220 entries in 17 categories. The awards, sponsored by Ohio Magazine, were presented during the Ohio Conference on Travel, the state's tourism conference for all sectors of the tourism industry.

Nine marketing professionals representing academia, consulting firms and ad agencies judged each entry based on concept, results, and creativity.

"Competition for these awards seems to grow every year, and this year was no exception. We had a record number of entries," said Melinda Huntley, Ohio Travel Association executive director.

"Winners truly represent the best of the best in marketing strategy and design. It's inspiring."

"We are thrilled to receive these awards which reflect our team's dedication to creativity, innovation, and excellence in marketing campaigns," said Bergeron. "I was honored to represent the MWCD at the Ohio Conference on Travel, and proud to have the opportunity to serve as this year's conference chair. The organizations that are represented at the Ohio Conference on Travel are some of the best in the state. To be recognized amongst your peers, who present tough competition, is exciting."

The Ohio Travel Association is a nonprofit trade association representing travel- and tourism-related businesses throughout the state. For more information on OTA, visit [www.ohiotravel.org](http://www.ohiotravel.org)





# Community Input Helps Shape Trails System Master Plan

MWCD continues its commitment to providing outdoor recreation opportunities through its vast network of trails, emphasizing their critical role in promoting community well-being, conservation, and environmental education.

The MWCD trail system offers a wide variety of hiking, biking, and equestrian paths that meander through the scenic landscapes of the Muskingum River Watershed. These trails provide opportunities for individuals and families to connect with nature, stay active, and explore Ohio's rich natural heritage.

MWCD is committed to expanding and improving its trail network to meet the growing demand for outdoor recreational opportunities. As part of this effort, MWCD recently sought

community input to develop a Master Trail Plan that will guide the enhancement and expansion of the trail system in the years ahead.

"We believe that trails are essential to the health and vitality of our communities," said Pete Novotny, MWCD Chief of Recreation. "They offer more than just outdoor fun — they connect people to nature, improve our quality of life, and foster a greater appreciation for conservation."

The feedback provided through the survey will help guide MWCD's efforts in planning and expanding the trail network in the coming years. Together, we can ensure that our trails continue to be a valuable resource for outdoor enthusiasts.



## Need a Speaker for Your Next Event?

Is your civic, social, or community group looking for speakers for upcoming meetings? How about providing information for a discussion about the MWCD or any of its many programs?

MWCD can provide the details by supplying a speaker and presentation for those in attendance.

For details, topics, or to book a date, contact Ethan Zucal at MWCD at (330) 556-4814 or by emailing at [ezucal@mwcd.org](mailto:ezucal@mwcd.org).



# Winter Activities

MWCD lakes are perfect locations for winter activities including cross country skiing, ice fishing, and snowshoeing. Snowshoeing is a great workout and easy to learn. Try it at one of our pop-up snowshoe hikes and rentals. Since snowshoeing is dependent on the snow, we will host pop-up snowshoe programs when a lake receives at least 3" of snowfall. Pop-up program locations and times will be posted on our Facebook pages, so make sure to follow your favorite lake or follow MWCD's page for all location announcements. Or visit [www.MWCD.org/calendar](http://www.MWCD.org/calendar) to sign up for pop-up program information.

## Winter Solstice Hike - Atwood

Returning for the fourth year, this popular hike celebrates the Winter Solstice and the beginning of more sunlight on Saturday, December 21. Take a self-guided hike along the Woodland Trail and bridge by the light of many luminaries and candles. Then enjoy hot chocolate, s'mores, and a fun Christmas craft at the Activity Center. The luminaries will be lit, and refreshments will be available between 6 and 8 pm. Parking is available at the Activity Center and the hike will be up to two miles long. As a self-guided tour, you can make it your own and go farther or turn around sooner.

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### MAIN OFFICE

1319 Third Street NW  
New Philadelphia, Ohio 44663  
(330) 343-6647  
Toll Free: (877) 363-8500  
[www.MWCD.org](http://www.MWCD.org)  
[info@mwcd.org](mailto:info@mwcd.org)

### ANNEX OFFICE

2050 Reiser Avenue SE  
New Philadelphia, Ohio 44663  
(330) 343-6647

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# Lake Views



## CATCH A LINE ON MWCD EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District has a variety of full-time and seasonal employment opportunities. Whether you are in high school, college, or advancing your career, we have opportunities for everyone.

Types of positions include: park and marina staff, law enforcement and security services, engineering, maintenance/grounds keeping, gate attendant, cleaning staff, and beach attendant.

For more information, please visit [www.MWCD.org](http://www.MWCD.org).