

Landowner Ditch Maintenance Q & A

PRESENTED BY WOOD SWCD & WOOD COUNTY ENGINEER'S OFFICE

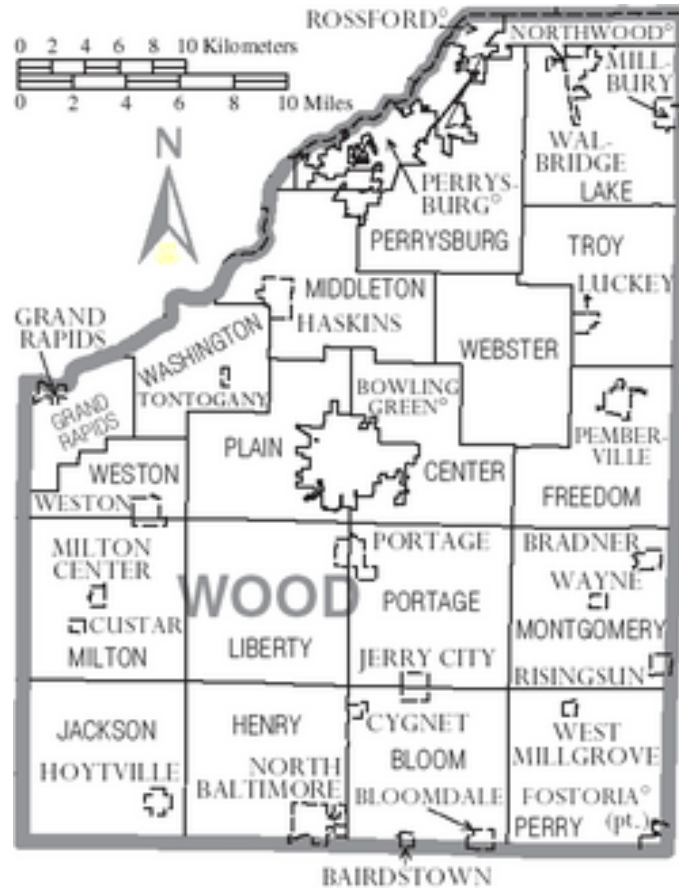
APRIL 18, 2023

Wood Soil & Water Conservation District

Dedicated to the care of the environment through responsible land and water policies, conservation practices, development, oversight and environmental education.

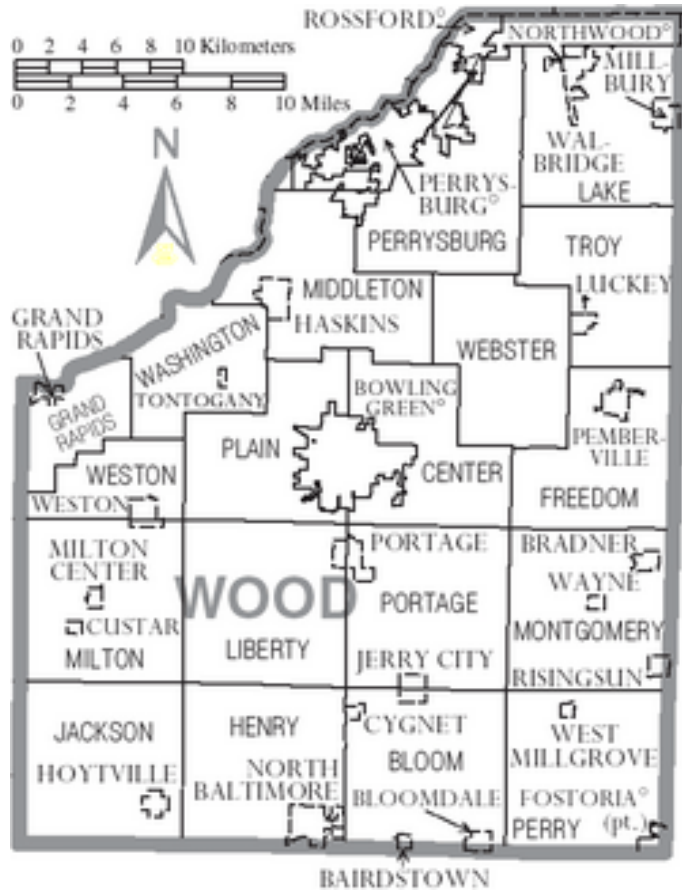


Wood County



- Land Mass = 620 sq. miles
- Approximately 397,000 acres
- 1,200+ miles of paved surfaces
- 245 miles of County Roads
- 790 miles of Township Roads
- 3,000 miles of open ditches and waterways
- 711 miles of county maintenance ditches

Wood County



- Over 132,000 residents in 2020
- 19 Townships
- 268,000 acres in farms
- 13% of farms use cover crops
- 71% of farms use reduce till or no-till

DRAINAGE IN OHIO

Most of Ohio is naturally poorly drained. Rural residents and farmers use ditches, grass waterways, streams and drainage tile the way city residents rely on storm sewers. Likewise, landowners should expect to pay to maintain those drainage systems the way city residents pay for sewer and water services.



DRAINAGE LAW

Ohio's drainage laws are complex. The reasonable-use rule allows landowners to alter surface drainage on their land only if it causes "reasonable" damage to upstream or downstream neighbors.

However, landowners can be required to pay for damages if a court deems their actions to be unreasonable. Cutting a drainage tile, filling a ditch, and doing new construction can all impact the flow of surface water and be found to be unreasonable.

IMPORTANCE OF DRAINAGE



For farmers, poor drainage often means higher input costs and lower yields due to loss of crops, delayed planting, replanting, soil compaction, and delayed harvesting.

The difference shows up in both land prices and rental rates, notes John Boblenz, a realtor based in Delaware County. “Land goes for 25 to 30 percent more if you have good drainage,” he explains. “It also makes a difference in how quick a farm sells.”



IMPORTANCE OF DRAINAGE

For homeowners, inadequate drainage can lead to basement flooding, wood rot, and ponding on their lawns.

For homeowners, drainage problems can affect not only the value of the home but also the well being of the residents. For instance, stagnant water in a yard can breed mosquitoes, and saturated soils can cause leach beds to fail.

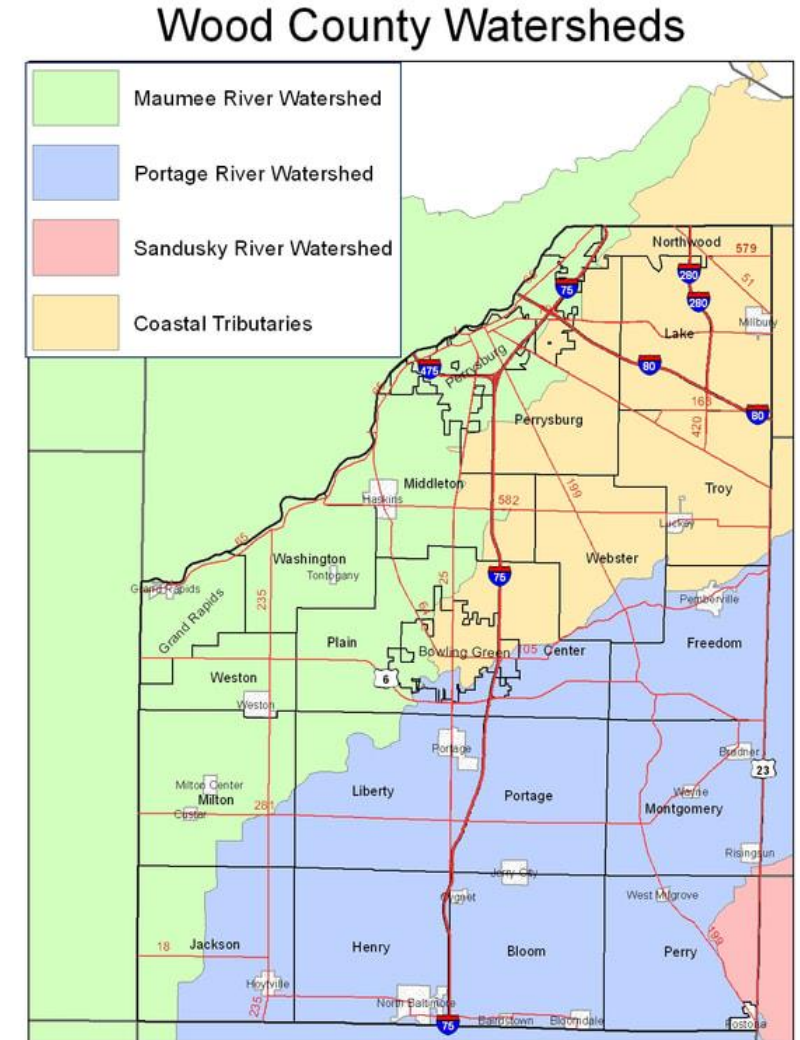
Generally, Boblenz says, the difference in the selling price of a poorly drained home site compared to a well-drained one is the cost of correcting the problem. In some cases, though, drainage problems can't be solved easily because the property doesn't have a drainage outlet.



WATERSHEDS

Everyone lives in a watershed, which is an area of land that drains into a single point such as a lake or stream. Excess surface and subsurface water must be removed through manmade drainage methods to prevent flooding.

Drainage practices on one property can significantly impact drainage on neighboring properties.



DRAINAGE MAINTENANCE

Without proper attention to drainage systems, brush and vegetation inhibit water flow in ditches, log jams clog culverts, tree roots plug drainage tile, and new development alters drainage patterns.

- Keep waterways clean from brush and trees; dead branches, leaves, and field debris; and trash.
- Keep a groundcover on the banks to prevent erosion.
- Provide proper cover for surface water to drain over, e.g., rock with a durable seeding of Kentucky 31 Fescue or like grass.
- Repair broken tile ends.





DRAINAGE EASEMENTS



Properties often contain drainage easements, which are areas of land reserved by the county for drainage maintenance activities.

Objects such as sheds, fencing, and trees should not be placed in the easement area and can be removed at the landowner's cost.

Ditch Cleaning Options and Descriptions:

Private Ditch Bottom Clean Out:

The least costly method of all of the processes. This process also has the least involvement by any governmental agency. Those requesting assistance make all the decisions and the project does not commence until all financial obligations are met by the group. These projects are not eligible for County Maintenance Programs managed by the Wood County Engineer.

Mutual Group Reconstruction:

Approximately two and a half to three times more costly than private ditch bottom clean outs. Both ditch banks will be reconstructed. Some decisions are still in the groups' control. This type of project could be eligible for County Maintenance Programs.

County Petition Ditch:

Approximately six to 10 times more costly than a Private Ditch Bottom Clean Out. It is a legal process. It involves the reconstruction and removal of brush from both banks and correction of all tile outlet pipes and surface water conveying devices. No decisions are made by the group and the ditch is added to the County Ditch Maintenance Program.

ORC 940 Conservation Works of Improvement:

Three to five times more expensive than the previous option but is a legal process. It involves the reconstruction and removal of brush from both banks and correction of all tile outlet pipes and surface water conveying devices. Decisions by the group are very basic and minimal. This type of project would be eligible for County Maintenance Programs.

Contacts

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