



## 2026 Local Workgroup Meeting August 25, 2026

The local workgroup meeting (LWG) was held on August 25, 2026 in the Erie County Services Center and hosted by the Erie Soil and Water Conservation District (District). The meeting was led by Breann Hohman, District Directors with facilitation assistance by district staff Cody Benesh, Watershed/Wildlife Specialist, and Jarett Trendel, Conservation Program Specialist. This meeting was coordinated with assistance from the Erie/Huron Natural Resource Conservation Service staff Kevin Kaltenbach, District Conservationist, and Chris Meyer, Soil Conservationist. Participants of the meeting were as follows:

Jim Neill – ESWCD Board Chair  
Tom Wensink – ESWCD Board Treasurer  
Kurt Heyman – ESWCD Board Public Relations  
John Jackson – Friends of Pipe Creek Watershed  
Lee Alexanders – Greater Sandusky Partnership  
Tim White – Resident  
Emma Farahay – Erie County Engineer's Office  
Joe Weilnau – Erie County Engineer's Office  
Eric Dodrill – Erie County Engineer  
Matt Conner – Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife  
Phil Weilnau – ESWCD Associate Board Member  
Gary Toll – Resident  
Paul Demuth – Erie County farm Bureau

Breann Hohman began the meeting with an overview of the local work group's purpose, a background review of Erie County land use and resources, and highlights of conservation programs and projects of the District over the last several years (presentation and survey attached). Kevin Kaltenbach provided a review of programs provided by the Natural Resource Conservation Service, including hoop houses, forestry management (planning and invasive species removal), and Manure and Pasture management practices (waste storage facilities, stream livestock exclusion fencing, etc.) Hohman also presented results from an online public survey that was made available through social media posts, website, and email before the meeting. Thirteen responses were summarized for the group and are attached to this report.

Participants were instructed to break into smaller groups to discuss resource concerns identified by survey participants and to provide guidance on conservation program delivery. Below is a summary of the in-person meeting and online survey results.



## Identified Resource Concerns

### Water Quality

Concern: excessive phosphorus, sediment, animal waste, and microplastics

Actions: Phosphorus filters, increase R4 adoption, buffers, animal waste storage facilities, better manure application, conservation planning, education, monitoring, promotion of single-use plastics, education on ditch maintenance (erosion concerns)

### Soil Health/Soil Loss

Concern: Soil erosion, soil health

Actions: buffers, field days, engage more farmers in H2Ohio, more demonstrations or hands-on education, farm tours of conservation

### Habitat Loss

Concerns: Invasive species (particularly in forests), wildlife (specifically whitetail deer) conflict due to habitat loss

Actions: Invasive ID and management training, helping to build understanding of trade-offs between habitat protection/loss

### Land Use Change

Concern: loss of working lands, data centers

Actions: farmland preservation; become a resource for credible information about data centers

### Water quantity/Drainage

Concern: flooding, lack of adequate stormwater management/retention

Actions: Creation of in-stream wetlands, reservoirs

### Actions the District could take in the next 12 months

- Improve partnership with Erie MetroParks, particularly in helping to address water quality issues.
- Field Day
- Conservation Farm Tours
- Stop and meet with people - offering assistance when you see a resource concern
- Education on water quality impairments (what does it mean)
- Data center education for township trustees, could the District serve as an information source
- Facilitate more stream clean-ups and open dumping clean-ups

### Communications Preferences

#### Types

- Email
- Direct mail
- Text messages

#### Style of Education Events

- Full Field Days
- Evening Meetings
- Breakfast Meetings

The local workgroup meeting concluded with Hohman thanking the participants and explaining the District's next steps, which include providing a summary of the LWG to NRCS State Technical Committee and to the LWG participants as well as making the report available on the District's website (ErieConserves.org). The District plans to use the LWG recommendations for establishing short range goals in the 2027 Annual Plan of Work and long-range planning efforts.