



October 25, 2010

Soil and water conservation districts and Ohio State University Extension have both been key organizations in every Ohio county for decades assisting residents, landowners, and communities with a myriad of important issues and opportunities. They are a key part of the fabric that allows individuals, businesses, and communities to thrive. As two of your state leaders we know what a privilege it is to work with you and help you and your local partners succeed. We count on you, and you can count on us.

With the broad and successful reach of both SWCDs and county Extension programs, it has been critical and useful for both organizations to work closely together on many programs and projects. Those collaborations have led to much success and recognition. But it is probably inevitable that from time to time issues arise due to lack of communication or coordination, or just the proverbial "turf." With very tight local and state budgets, there is risk for more of those issues to emerge. We wish to be clear, that it should never be a case of either one organization or another. Rather, our discussions should reflect the uniqueness of each organization and the specialized strengths that we bring to bear on local issues.

Right now there is a major focus in Ohio on government. How much should we have? How much can we afford? Is it meeting our needs? Is it organized in the most efficient manner? In August, the Ohio Commission on Local Government Reform and Collaboration issued its report: "Building a Better Ohio: Creating Collaboration in Governance." In short, the public is counting on us in government and at OSU Extension to operate in an effective, efficient, coordinated manner.

As both of our organizations at the county and state levels move forward to meet Ohioans needs and expectations, it is fair that issues and questions arise that need to be sorted out, but hopefully in a positive and cooperative manner. We encourage you to recognize the times we are in and what the public expects, and do your best to figure these issues out in a mutually satisfactory "win-win" scenario. If some outside assistance might be helpful in achieving this approach, both of us and our regional and state staff members are available to help.

We encourage you to look at the long-term big picture, and realize that it is in your interest and the interest of our organizations statewide, to successfully figure out the most positive ways to collaborate and coordinate our important programs. Please call on us if you think we can help.

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