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ODA director visits counties impacted by drought

COLUMBUS — The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) recently visited two counties impacted by extreme drought. By the middle of September, Darke County was listed under the category of moderate drought while much of Miami County was listed under severe drought conditions. Much of Ohio's southeast is listed as extreme or exceptional drought. At the Greenville City Council meeting on Sept. 17, Greenville Water Superintendent Curtis Locker shared he expects Darke County to be categorized with extreme drought conditions.

Nearly two dozen counties in southeastern Ohio have been declared primary natural disaster areas by the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency due to drought. ODA Director Brian Baldrige visited farmers in Monroe and Noble counties to learn how the conditions have impacted their crops

and livestock. In August, ODA visited Athens, Morgan, and Washington counties.

"I hear from farmers every day who are concerned about the worsening drought conditions, and when the agricultural community faces challenges, we all do," said ODA Director Brian Baldrige. "Our role is connecting impacted crop and livestock farmers to resources and assistance to help sustain their livelihoods and continue to feed the families in our state."

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, these counties suffered from a drought intensity value during the growing season of 1) D2 Drought-Severe for eight or more consecutive weeks or 2) D3 Drought-Extreme or D4 Drought-Exceptional.

The primary counties currently designated as D4 are:

Athens, Belmont, Fairfield, Fayette, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Highland,



Ohio Department of Agriculture website

Director Brian Baldrige speaks with farmers from Monroe and Noble counties.

Hocking, Jackson, Jefferson, Madison, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pickaway, Pike, Ross, Vinton and Washington.

Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts report the impacts of the drought in southeastern Ohio are

extensive. These include worsening pasture conditions, creeks drying, ponds low, corn and soybeans conditions not where they should be, fruits and vegetables being impacted, and winter hay is being used early, causing shortages of feed for livestock.

Through the USDA FSA, resources and programs are available for farmers experiencing the effects of the drought. ODA encourages anyone impacted to contact their local Farm Service Agency.

A drought this severe can also impact stress levels in the agricultural community. As food and agriculture make up Ohio's number one industry – our farmers carry a heavy load. It is important to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. ODA's Got Your Back campaign offers information and resources for the farming community.

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Top Notch 4-H

GREENVILLE — Top Notch 4 H Club met at the Darke County Fairgrounds Swine Barn on Aug. 13. Fair events such as barn clean - up, ring help, due dates for forms, and the fair schedule were discussed. After the meeting, members stayed to eat pizza and set up for the fair.

Aultman named to policy development committee

COLUMBUS — Twenty Ohio Farm Bureau leaders have been named to the 2024 Ohio Farm Bureau Federation Policy Development Committee. The committee collects and organizes public policy recommendations from county Farm Bureaus and presents the final policy suggestions to be voted on by Ohio Farm Bureau’s delegates during the state annual meeting in December.

In its initial session, the committee heard from government leaders, subject matter experts and Farm Bureau staff on topics such as carbon sequestration, CAUV, sustainable aviation fuel, land use, annexation, rural child care, aquifer/water issues, livestock traceability and vet telehealth.

The policy committee consists of 10 members from Ohio Farm Bureau’s board of trustees and 10 representatives of county Farm Bureaus.

The committee is chaired by Ohio Farm Bureau First Vice President Cy Prettyman of New Bloomington and includes OFBF President Bill Patterson of Chesterland and Treasurer Adele Flynn of Wellington. State trustees on the committee are Matt Aultman of Greenville, Danielle Burch of Salem, Mackenzie Deetz of Sugarcreek, Katherine Harrison of Groveport, Craig Pohlman of Venedocia, Nicol Reiterman of Washington Court House and Matt Vodraska of Doylestown.

County Farm Bureau representatives are Heather Bryan of Hancock County, Brandie Finney of Crawford County, Mary Fleming of Delaware County, Christine Haines of Washington County, Stacy Irwin of Columbiana County, Jim Percival of Greene County, Larry Theurer of Cuyahoga County, Hannah Thompson of Athens-Meigs County, Cindy Petitti-Walton of Stark County and Vicki Vance Weiser of Knox County.

Ohio Farm Bureau’s mission is working together for Ohio farmers to



Matt Aultman

advance agriculture and strengthen our communities. Learn more at ohio-farmbureau.org.

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Dull Homestead draft permit to operate

BROOKVILLE — In accordance with OAC rule 901:10-6-01, public notice is hereby given that the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) is accepting comments on a draft Permit to Operate (PTO) renewal for the facility called “Dull Homestead, Inc.” which is located at 10404 National Road, Brookville, Ohio 45309 in Montgomery County, Clay Township and in the Lower Great Miami Watershed. If the final permit is issued, the PTO would be valid for five years.

A copy of the draft permit can be obtained by completing a public records request using the following link: <https://agri.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/oda/divisions/legal-office/public-records-site-area>. Any person may submit written comments and/or request a public meeting on the draft permit. A request for a public meeting must be in writing and shall state the nature of the issues to be raised at the public meeting. Comments and/or public meeting

requests must be received by the DLEP office no later than 5 p.m. on October 14, 2024. Comments can either be mailed to: Ohio Department of Agriculture, Division of Livestock Environmental Permitting, 8995 East Main Street, Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068 or emailed to lepp@agri.ohio.gov. Comments received after this date will not be considered. A public meeting will be held when required by OAC 901:10-6-04(C) and may be held where authorized by OAC 901:10-6-01(D). Persons have a right to provide a written or oral statement for the record at the public meeting, if a meeting is scheduled.

The Division of Livestock Environmental Permitting maintains an “interested parties” list for each Ohio county as well as a statewide list for notification of all draft permits. If you would like to be added to either or both of these lists, please send a request to lepp@agri.ohio.gov or call 614-387-0470.

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Kendig and Schmitz awarded 2024 Jr. Fair Poultry Scholarship

GREENVILLE — At the 2024 Darke County Jr. Fair Celebration of Achievement on Aug. 21, Hannah Kendig and Adi Schmitz were both awarded \$1,000 scholarships from the Darke County Jr. Fair Poultry Department through the generous efforts of the poultry baskets buyers at the event.

Kendig is a 2024 graduate of Arcanum High School and is attending Ohio Northern University in the honors program majoring in pre-medical biology with the plans of pursuing a career in medical research. She is a 13-year member of the Joyful Jets 4-H club and has shown poultry for 10 years. At the 2024 Darke County Fair, Kendig was

named the overall poultry showman winner and grand champion broilers. She is the daughter of Adam and Shannon Kendig.

Schmitz is a 2024 graduate of Mississinawa Valley High School and is attending The Ohio State University ATI in Wooster majoring in Animal Science. Her future plan is to become an Animal Nutritionist. She has shown poultry for 10 years and is a member of Jackson Friendship 4-H Club. Schmitz served one year as the Darke County Junior Fair Poultry Queen and served two years on Darke County Junior Fair Board. She is the daughter of Don and Tina Schmitz.



Hannah Kendig

Submitted photos



Adi Schmitz

Submitted photos

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Chapter visits the Senior Citizen Community Center

VERSAILLES — On Monday, Sept. 10, the Versailles FFA Members visited the Versailles Senior Citizen Community Center to celebrate the monthly birthday celebration. Every month they celebrate birthdays with cake and ice cream as well with games or a craft at the end. This month the residents played bingo, next month

the FFA will be celebrating October birthdays with a fall craft. The Versailles FFA members who attended were: Abby Henry, Delenye Bulcher, Josh Henry, Josie Pothast, Gabe McGlinch, Gracie Henry, Brooklyn Livingston, Lydia Breeze, Triston Ward, Allison Perrion, and Paige Gehret.



Submitted photos

Versailles FFA members that helped celebrate the September birthdays and played bingo included: Abby Henry, Delenye Bulcher, Josh Henry, Josie Pothast, Gabe McGlinch, Gracie Henry, Brooklyn Livingston, Lydia Breeze, Triston Ward, Allison Perrion, and Paige Gehret.

Special event for veterans

VERSAILLES — The Versailles FFA invites all veterans along with their spouses, spouses of deceased veterans, and active duty military members and their parents to a free dinner on Nov. 7 to recognize them and their service to the country.

This event includes a free dinner and remarks from State Representative Angie King and presentation of gifts made by Versailles FFA members.

The free dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. in the Versailles Cafetorium followed by the guest speakers and presentation of special gifts. The cafeteria can be accessed from door 19

in the bus parking lot. This lot can be accessed by the drive directly across from Elmwood Drive. The event is completely free for all in attendance.

Please RSVP to attend this event by October 28th by calling Versailles High School Secretary Reyna Shardo at 937-526-4427-ext. 3000, FFA Advisor Mrs. Wuebker at 937-423-2369, FFA Advisor Ms. Bergman at 937-621-9136 or Versailles FFA President Colin Batten at 937-621-6907. Or you can contact email contacts ay reyna.shardo@vtigers.org Mrs. Wuebker at dena.wuebker@vtigers.org or Ms. Bergman at taylor.bergman@vtiger.org

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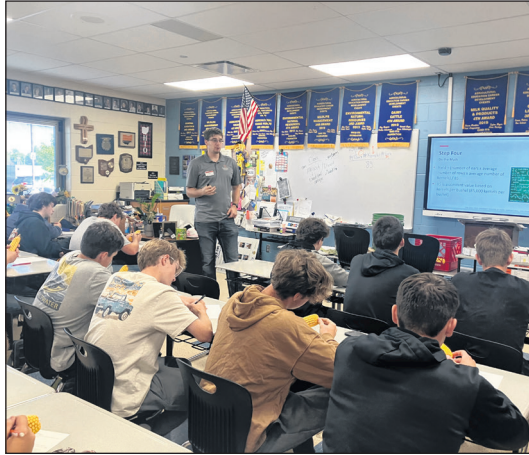
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Versailles hosts corn growing challenge

Versailles FFA Sponsoring Corn Growing Challenge & Hosted OSU Extension Educator Caden Buschur

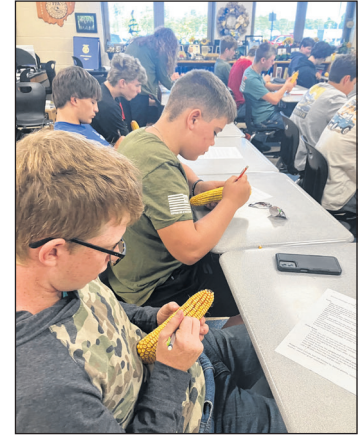
VERSAILLES — On Sept. 11, Caden Buschur Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Educator for Darke County spoke to the Versailles Agricultural Education Classes. Caden spoke about staging vegetative growth, determining vegetative and reproductive growth stages in corn, Growing Degree Days (GDDs), calculating GDDs, estimating corn yields using the Yield Component Method and the importance of knowing estimated corn yields. Individual ears of corn were brought in for Versailles Ag



Submitted photos
Caden Buschur, OSU Extension Educator, is shown speaking to all the Versailles Ag Ed classes and helped kick off the corn growing challenge.



Submitted photos
Versailles Ag Ed Students Danica York and Maggie McGlinch are shown calculating estimated corn yields.



Submitted photos
Versailles Ag Ed Students Luke DeMange and Cale DeMange are shown calculating estimated corn yields.

Ed students to calculate the potential yield using the Yield Component Method. Caden's presentation helped

kick off the Versailles FFA Corn Growing Contest. Any Versailles Ag Ed student can bring in corn until Sept

27th to participate in the Corn Growing Challenge. A special thank you to Caden Buschur for sharing his

knowledge with the classes and to Jeff Wuebker and John Wyler for gathering the corn used in class.

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Wilcox gets help with animal science degree

STILLWATER, Okla. – On Sept. 4, a Darke County student was honored by the Oklahoma State University Ferguson College of Agriculture with academic scholarship support for the 2024-2025 academic year.

These scholarships are part of the more than \$1.8 million that students receive from the Ferguson College and its academic departments. Students from all areas of study are considered for university scholarships, which can be combined with college and departmental opportunities.

“We are proud to support new students as they begin their academic careers in the Ferguson College of Agriculture,” said Cynda Clary, Ferguson College of Agriculture associate dean of academic programs. “We look forward to seeing the contributions they will make within our college and at OSU. We are grateful for our donors and friends who support these scholarships and our students.”

The 2024-2025 scholarship recipient is Kiersten Wilcox, New Madison, Ani-



Submitted photo

Kiersten Wilcox received the Joseph Bleming Memorial Freshman Scholarship at Oklahoma State University.

mal Science, Joseph Fleming Memorial Freshman Scholarship.

The Ferguson College of Agriculture believes in the value of hands-on education and the importance of having a well-rounded student experience. The college’s award-winning faculty members are dedicated to developing students and are passionate about adding value to the total educational experience. With 16 majors, a variety of study options and more than 60 student organizations, the college is committed to expanding minds and inspiring purpose. Learn more at agriculture.okstate.edu.

Help preserve farmland through easements

COLUMBUS — Soil & Water Conservation Districts, land trusts, and city, township, and county entities are invited to apply to the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Office of Farmland Preservation for local sponsor certification from Sept. 16-Oct. 18.

Local sponsors that complete the certification application and qualify will be allocated a portion of the funding available in Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program 2025 funds. These funds are used to purchase agricultural easements on Ohio farms, preserving productive agricultural farmland in perpetuity.

Certified local sponsors will then accept local landowner applications and help secure easements through ODA’s Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program. Once the easement is secured, the local sponsor visits the farm once a year to complete a monitoring report to ensure the land is being used for



Lake County SWCD

Shown is a Lake County farm that joined the Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program.

agricultural purposes.

The application is available on ODA’s local sponsor page. Any organization interested in being a local sponsor for the 2025 landowner application year must apply during this time period.

If you have questions, please contact the Farmland Preservation Office at (614) 728-6238 or farmlandpres@agri.ohio.gov.



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Chapter attends Farm Bureau banquet

VERSAILLES — On Thursday, Sept. 12, members of the Versailles FFA traveled to Greenville to attend the Darke County Farm Bureau Banquet. While in attendance, the members had the opportunity to learn more about what the Farm Bureau does and opportunities for members within the Bureau. Each FFA chapter had a representative to speak on their fall activities, Colin Batten, Versailles FFA President spoke upon the Versailles FFA Chapter. Versailles FFA members who attended include: Jayna Luthman, Colin Batten, Patrick McGlinch, Gabe McGlinch, Rhylan Broerman, Greta Broering, and Paige Gehret.



Shown are (top row) Jayna Luthman, Colin Batten, Patrick McGlinch, Gabe McGlinch, (bottom row) Rhylan Broerman, Greta Broering, and Paige Gehret. Submitted photo

OFA Foundation offers conservation grants

ZANESVILLE — The Ohio Forestry Association Foundation opened its grant application window for small-scale projects on Sept. 15. These grants are designed to assist an organization in a conservation education project, with a maximum individual grant amount of \$2,500. Applications will be accepted until Oct. 13 this year, with grant awards being selected and announced by December 1 for funding to be used in the following calendar year. See complete details of the grant

program, including application details and directions.

The Ohio Forestry Association Foundation is a charitable, non-profit organization working to promote conservation education and critical awareness of the importance of forest resources to our environment and economy. Our mission is focused on providing financial, educational, and technical resources to individuals and organizations throughout Ohio. Learn more at www.ohioforest.org/page/Foundation.

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Alliance addresses mental health in agriculture

COLUMBUS — From weather, to rising prices and costs of doing business, to long hours, and the weight of keeping the family farm in business can cause incredible amounts of stress and take a toll on a farmer's mental wellbeing.

A newly created alliance will focus on mental health in agriculture to ensure Ohio's farmers, families, and communities are better equipped to deal with stress.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA), Ohio Department of Health (ODH), Ohio Department

See MENTAL HEALTH | 13



The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA), Ohio Department of Health (ODH), Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS), The Ohio State University (OSU), Ohio Farm Bureau (OFB), Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation, and Farm Credit Mid-America make up the new Ohio Agricultural Mental Health Alliance (OAMHA). Ohio Department of Agriculture website



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Mental Health

From page 12

of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS), The Ohio State University (OSU), Ohio Farm Bureau (OFB), Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation, and Farm Credit Mid-America make up the new Ohio Agricultural Mental Health Alliance (OAMHA).

The group's first action is introducing a new, anonymous survey to seek feedback directly from rural communities.

"Ohioans look out for one another," said Ohio Governor Mike DeWine. "This survey will provide valuable help to numerous communities. I urge our farmers and beyond to answer these tough but necessary questions. You won't only be helping yourself; you'll be helping your family and friends."

"Farmer mental health is such an important issue that is often overlooked until we read about someone we know, or someone in

the community, affected by tragedy," said ODA Director Brian Baldrige. "Our goal is to lift up every farmer, family, and neighborhood and let them know we are here for them."

The survey aims to gauge stress and how it's being dealt with. OSU created the survey in partnership with OhioMHAS and ODH; working with OFB they utilized a pilot group to provide feedback.

"Farming communities face different types of stress than those in other occupations, and oftentimes our mental health counselors are unsure of how to handle questions and concerns related to farming," said Cathann Kress, vice president for agricultural administration and dean of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences at The Ohio State University. "This survey will help us all better understand the needs of our farming community and allow us to develop programming to meet the needs of all Ohioans."

"Farm stress and mental health has been something that has been talked about in whispers

for generations and it is time to turn up the volume about it," said Adam Sharp, executive vice president of Ohio Farm Bureau. "This survey will not only shed light on what is causing stress and how those who are struggling with those stressors cope, it will also bring more awareness to this very important issue and help to provide adequate resources to our rural communities."

OAMHA will use survey results to determine where resources are needed and help ensure support is available to communities in need.

"We know that Ohioans working in the agricultural industry experience many challenges that impact their mental health, yet, to date, we have very little data to guide our efforts," said OhioMHAS Director Lori Criss. "This new survey is an opportunity for those in the industry to share their perspectives about their mental health concerns and have a voice in guiding the development of better support for the mental wellbeing of Ohio's agricultural families."

OAMHA encourages media, agricultural stakeholders, and all Ohioans to share the link or QR code below to help create awareness. In addition, ODA's Got Your Back campaign offers information and resources for the agricultural community. As food and agriculture make up Ohio's number one industry – our farmers carry a heavy load. It is important to help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.

It takes all of us to create a stronger Ohio.

Take the survey at https://osu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9pHMUc1n2IMMkgm?Q_CHL=qr.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides residents with one, easy to remember number to call when they or someone they know is in crisis. On average, more than 12,000 Ohioans per month who are experiencing or affected by suicidal, mental health, and/or substance use crises have used the lifeline to receive free, 24/7, confidential support and connections to local resources.










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Investing in specialty crop research

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced an investment of nearly \$121 million to advance research and Extension activities that aim to solve key challenges facing specialty crop and organic agriculture producers. The investment includes \$70.4 million to support specialty crop production research across the United States and \$50.5 million to support farmers and ranchers who grow and market high-quality organic food, fiber and organic products.

Specialty crops are defined in the Farm Bill as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. This investment is part of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Specialty Crop Research Initiative.

"We know specialty and organic

crops add nutrition to our diets and value to sustainable agriculture systems," said Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young, USDA Chief Scientist and Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics. "These crops also play a vital role preserving cultural heritage and enhancing economic opportunities across local, regional and global food systems, making them great competitive funding investments that target some of the most difficult challenges facing specialty crop and organic producers nationwide."

NIFA's specialty crops production investment today builds on USDA's recently announced \$82.3 million in grant funding through the Agricultural Marketing Service to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops and support the industry's producers. The funding was awarded

through USDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) and the Specialty Crop Multi-State Grant (SCMP) Program. From market development to consumer education to research, these programs expand markets and increase competitiveness of the specialty crop industry and increase access to specialty crops for consumers.

Examples of the 17 projects funded by NIFA's Specialty Crop Research Initiative include:

North Carolina State University: Manual labor costs are significant in horticulture, including nursery crop production. A team of researchers will develop sustainable solutions for labor, efficiency, automation and production in the nursery industry. (\$9.8 million)

Washington State University: Apple and pear crops are increasing-

ly susceptible to devastating losses due to extreme temperatures driven by climate change. To address this challenge, researchers will develop mitigation strategies for current cultivars and knowledge to quickly assess new cultivars' suitability for future climate conditions. (\$6.7 million)

NIFA's \$50.5 million investment in 30 organic agriculture projects is part of NIFA's Organic Agriculture Program, which includes the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) and the Organic Transitions Program. OREI projects fund research, education and Extension projects to improve yields, quality and profitability for producers and processors who have adopted organic standards. NIFA-funded Organic Transitions Program projects focus on research, education and

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Extension efforts to help existing and transitioning organic livestock and crop producers adopt organic practices and improve their market competitiveness.

“Organic agriculture plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable and healthy food systems that benefit people and the planet,” said USDA NIFA Director Dr. Manjit Misra. “NIFA’s investments in organic research and Extension programs help ensure farmers can meet growing demand for organic products, which provide valuable economic opportunities for growers and more choices for consumers.”

Examples of the 23 projects funded by NIFA’s OREI grants include:

Pennsylvania State University: Understanding the links between integrated crop management practices and certain food- and feed-quality endpoints is necessary for identifying market constraints and opportunities for small grain sequences within reduced-tillage organic grain systems. This integrated research

and Extension project aims to improve the productivity and market potential of spring- and fall-sown organic small grains to increase ecological and economic resilience of organic grain production systems within Pennsylvania and the Northeast United States. (\$1.9 million)

The Organic Center for Education and Promotion: There is a critical lack of racial diversity across the agricultural sector and the organic industry, especially apparent in the population of organic certifiers, organic inspectors, and in organizations and universities staffs who provide much of the nation’s technical assistance and educational programming in agriculture. This workforce development project focuses on jumpstarting participation and motivation for a diverse representation in future organic leadership that helps make the organic sector more inclusive, equitable and just. (\$705,000)

Examples of the 7 projects funded under NIFA’s Organic Transitions Program include:

University of Wisconsin: Transitioning to organic farming in Wisconsin requires developing tailored soil health management practices guidelines to help organic farmers improve nutrient-use efficiency, increase crop-yield potential and mitigate climate-change impacts like drought. This research project seeks to leverage a statewide soil health dataset, enhanced by new field observations, remote sensing data and advanced machine learning models, to create a web tool offering region- and field-specific guidelines to assist organic grain farmers manage soil health and support climate-resilient farming. (\$997,000)

Michigan State University: Organic tree fruit production east of the Mississippi river will not be sustainable without effective management of bacterial diseases including fire blight, bacterial canker and bacterial spot. Bacteriophages (phages) represent a promising tool for managing bacterial plant diseases; however, phages have not been commercially

developed mainly due to reduced and inconsistent efficacy. Scientists will investigate the phage-disease dynamics on apple and cherry flowers for fire blight on apple trees and bacterial canker on cherry trees. (\$1 million)

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America’s food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy, and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

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USDA launches online debt consolidation tool

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is announcing the launch of the Debt Consolidation Tool, an innovative online tool available through farmers.gov that allows agricultural producers to enter their farm operating debt and evaluate the potential savings that might be provided by obtaining a debt consolidation loan with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) or a local lender.

"Providing producers with options to structure their debt in a manner that affords them every opportunity to meet the goals of their agricultural operation is the best way to ensure the nation's farmers and ranchers build financial equity and resilience," said FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux.

A debt consolidation loan is a new loan used to pay off other existing operating loans or lines of credit that might have unreasonable rates and terms. By combining multiple eligible debts into a single, larger loan, borrowers may

obtain more favorable payment terms such as a lower interest rate or lower payments. Consolidating debt may also provide farmers and ranchers additional cash flow flexibilities.

The Debt Consolidation Tool is a significant addition to FSA's suite of improvements designed to modernize its Farm Loan Programs. The tool enhances customer service and increases opportunities for farmers and ranchers to achieve financial viability by helping them identify potential savings that could be reinvested in their farming and ranching operation, retirement accounts, or college savings accounts.

Producers can access the Debt Consolidation Tool by visiting farmers.gov/debt-consolidation-tool. The tool is built to run on modern browsers including Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser. Producers do not need to create a farmers.gov account or access the authenticated customer portal to use the tool.

Additional Farm Loan Programs Improvements

FSA recently announced significant changes to Farm Loan Programs through the Enhancing Program Access and Delivery for Farm Loans rule. These policy changes, to take effect September 25, 2024, are designed to better assist borrowers to make strategic investments in the enhancement or expansion of their agricultural operations.

FSA also has a significant initiative underway to streamline and automate the Farm Loan Program customer-facing business process. For the over 26,000 producers who submit a direct loan application annually, FSA has made several impactful improvements including:

The Loan Assistance Tool that provides customers with an interactive online, step-by-step guide to identifying the direct loan products that may be a fit for their business needs and to understanding the application process.

The Online Loan Application, an interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet, and build a farm operating plan.

An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local USDA Service Center to pay a loan installment.

A simplified direct loan paper application, reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.

A new educational hub with farm loan resources and videos.

USDA encourages producers to reach out to their local FSA farm loan staff to ensure they fully understand the wide range of loan and servicing options available to assist with starting, expanding, or maintaining their agricultural opera-

See USDA | 18



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RING#2: Starts 9:00 A.M.

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USDA

From page 16

tion. To conduct business with FSA, please contact your local USDA Service Center.

FSA helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners invest in, improve, protect and expand their agricultural operations through the delivery of agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster recovery and marketing programs through a national network of state and county offices and locally elected county committees. For more information, visit fsa.usda.gov.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit usda.gov.

USDA offers clean energy financing

COLUMBUS — U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development in Ohio State Director Jonathan McCracken announced that Buckeye Power, Inc., headquartered in Columbus, will receive a share of \$7.3 billion in funding through the Empowering Rural America (New ERA) program to build clean energy systems in rural communities in Ohio.

"Rural electric cooperatives have played an essential role in ensuring that rural areas not only here in Ohio, but across the country, have access to reliable, affordable electricity," said McCracken. "In one of the most transformative investments since the New Deal, USDA's New ERA program is a historic commitment to building stronger rural communities and a more resilient, sustainable power grid that also promotes clean energy."

Buckeye Power will use its New ERA investment to bolster renewable energy production and storage as the co-op prepares to shutter Unit 3 operations at the coal-fired, Jefferson County-based Cardinal Generating Station. Buckeye's current renewable portfolio includes solar, anaerobic digestion and biogas, methane generation, and hydropower.

Formed in 1959, Buckeye Power is a generation

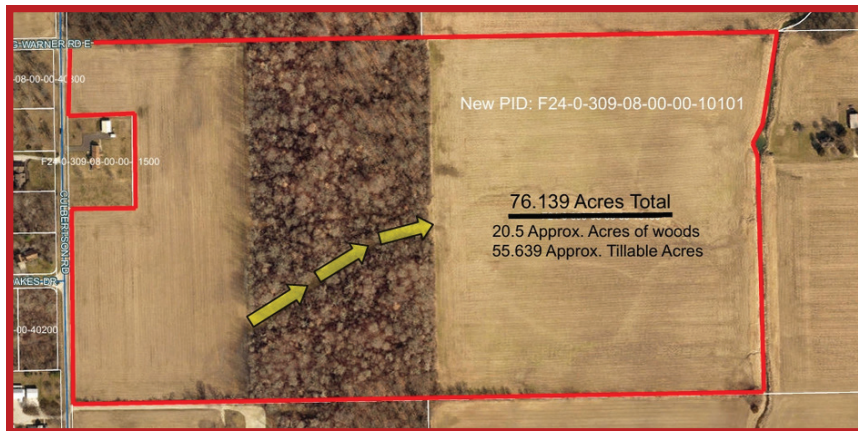
and transmission cooperative that provides reliable, affordable electricity to its 24 Ohio-based member co-ops, who then distribute it to nearly 400,000 homes and businesses in 77 counties throughout the state.

This investment is expected to reduce harmful air pollution and carbon emissions by the annual equivalent of taking 540,000 gasoline powered cars off the road. Ohio Rural co-ops will also see lower utility bills and invest in 36 megawatts of solar and 80 megawatts of energy storage across the state.

USDA awarded New ERA funding to 16 recipients nationwide and expects this will help deliver cleaner and more affordable energy to approximately five million households across 23 states, representing 20% of the nation's rural households, farms, businesses, and schools.

New ERA and other investments in rural clean energy through the 2021 Inflation Reduction Act account for the largest investment in rural electrification since President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act in 1936 as part of the New Deal.

USDA expects to announce additional New ERA and Powering Affordable Clean Energy (PACE) program awards in the coming months.



For more info and photos including aerial footage visit our website.
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Land Auction

Weds. - Oct. 23, 2024 @ 6PM

76.139 Acres Darke County Farm Ground

Culbertson Rd. - Greenville, OH 45331

Auction will be held at Romer's Caterings: Side Party Room
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*****New Survey has been completed - Acres: 76.139
PID: F24-0-309-08-00-00-10101****

**** Appraisal on the value of standing mature timber which consists of mostly walnut, along with oak, maple, and cherry is approximately \$40,000 for 35 mature trees ready, and several more that will be harvestable in 6-10 years for additional value. Appraisal done by Kline Timber Co.****

Selling at auction will be 76.139 acres with approx. 56 +/- of tillable farm ground and 20 +/- acres of harvestable standing timber & woodland. Complete access to the property is on Culbertson Road, with a cut-through access to the east side through the woods (see map). ****New estimated annual taxes are \$2,231.59. Land access and inspections will be allowed after the harvest of fall crops, please contact us to obtain accessibility prior to inspecting.**

Terms: \$10,000 will be required down on the day of auction with balance due no later than December 31, 2024. The buyer(s) will be required to sign a purchase contract and all other necessary documents at the conclusion of the auction. There will be no contingencies accepted with the purchase contract, please have financing in order prior to bidding!

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