



WESTERN LAKE ERIE BASIN BULLETIN

April 2008

Healthy Land ~ Healthy Lake

Volume 1, Issue 2

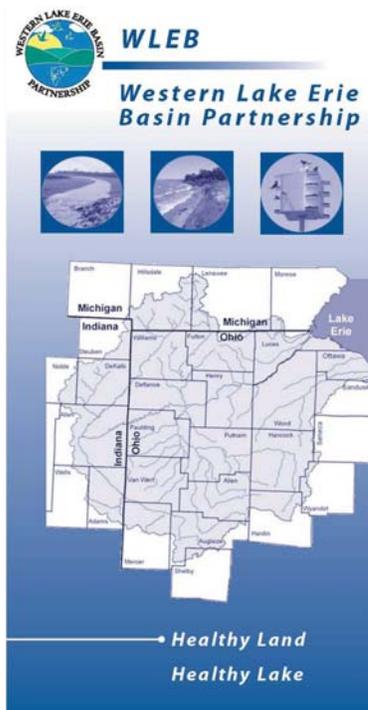
Welcome to a new healthy land and lake 2008!

Spring has finally sprung, or so they say. And with it comes those April showers. Depending on who you ask, this may or may not be a welcome relief from those February (and March) snow showers. Now that spring is upon us, everyone is ready to get back outdoors and get their hands dirty. Farmers are getting back in the fields, homeowners are planning their vegetable and flower gardens, and road crews are digging the orange barrels out of storage (although some places they never got put away it seems). Along with all this talk of work outdoors comes the opportunity to do a few things for your watershed as well. Hopefully you will consider a rain garden or rain barrel as a part of your landscaping plans this year. We hope that you enjoy this, the second issue of the WLEB Bulletin. We will be back in an email box near you in October. Until then, have a wonderful summer, and check out the latest happenings online at www.wleb.org!

Strategic Plan Accomplishments

The WLEB Strategic Plan, as adopted, includes action items with Short Term, Intermediate, and Long Term goals. These goals are meant to be achieved in one, three, and three to ten years respectively. Each action item includes primary agencies responsible for implementation, and a time frame for implementation. As the action items are completed, the strategic plan will be updated to reflect the Partnership's accomplishments. These accomplishments will also be included in the WLEB newsletter, as a way to provide more regular updates to the Partnership members and interested stakeholders.

One of our action items was to develop a brochure about the WLEB Partnership. This brochure is now available and includes valuable information regarding the Western Lake Erie Basin Partnership. Review it online and at your local SWCD or NRCS office.



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The WLEB Bulletin - A Tour

As the *WLEB Bulletin* enters its second issue, our loyal readers will begin to notice that several regular features are making repeat appearances within these pages. We thought it wise to provide a quick overview of our planned regular features. If you or your organization would like to contribute an article for one of these features in the future, or if you have ideas for additional regular features, please let us know! The *WBB* is meant to be a forum for communication about the Partnership and the activities of its members. There will always be room within these pages for additional information from the WLEB Partners.

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WESTERN LAKE ERIE BASIN PARTNERSHIP

Mission Statement

The *WLEB Partnership* is a tri-state partnership dedicated to enhancing multi-purpose projects that improve land and water resource management in the basin and promote a healthy, productive watershed.

Partners:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, NRCS
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 U.S. Geological Survey,
 Ohio Water Science Center
 Governor of Indiana
 Governor of Michigan
 Governor of Ohio
 Indiana State Technical Committee
 Michigan State Technical Committee
 Ohio Department of Natural Resources,
 Division of SWCD
 National Association of
 Conservation Districts
 Maumee River Basin Partnership of
 Local Governments
 Ohio State Technical Committee

Western Lake Erie Basin Partners
 are equal opportunity
 employers and providers.

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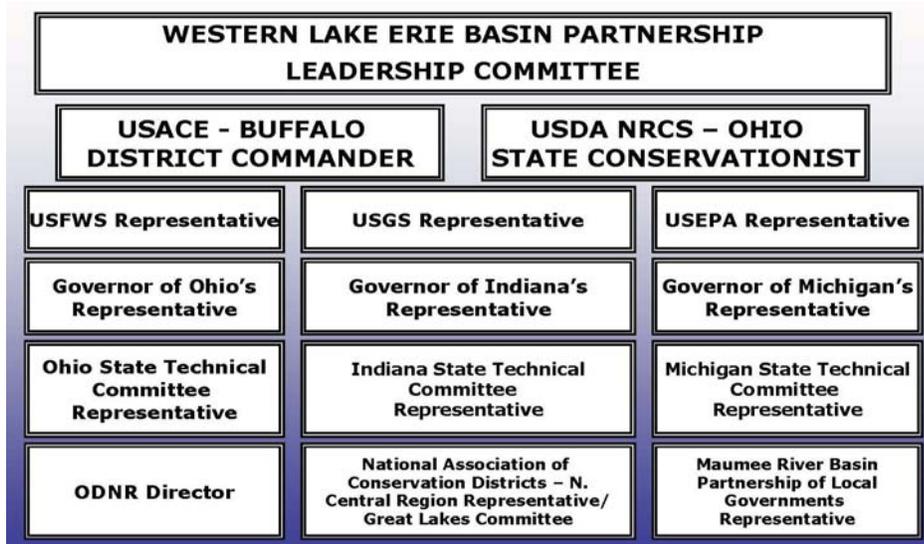
World Wide Web:
wleb.org

The WLEB Partnership

The WLEB Charter was agreed to on March 29, 2006, and the signatories agreed to develop a consensus-based Partnership to pursue the following principles:

- ❖ The Partnership is committed to collaboration and consensus building - sharing resources and knowledge to link land use to water quality, support ongoing efforts and identify new opportunities to enhance and improve the watershed.
- ❖ The Partnership will apply watershed-based solutions to local problems and apply local solutions to watershed problems -inclusively empowering and building the capacity of local watershed groups and supporting ongoing efforts.
- ❖ The Partnership is results oriented - it will define the baseline status of the basin, identify and prioritize science based solutions, responsibly support the implementation of innovative and cooperative projects, monitor and evaluate its actions and support an adaptive management approach.
- ❖ The Partnership will speak with one voice, promote transparency, encourage participation, be responsive, create awareness, educate and inform.
- ❖ The Partnership will provide the structure necessary to coordinate public and private resources across political boundaries to accelerate achievement of environmental goals and support for local conservation initiatives.

The Leadership Committee for the WLEB Partnership is comprised of senior members of their respective organizations. This group oversees the efforts of an Operational Committee and Coordination Teams in four areas: Project Coordination Team, Outreach/Public Education Coordination Team, Resource Coordination Team, and Research & Data Coordination Team. The WLEB Partnership Leadership Committee is outlined below.



WLEB Partner Focus - OSU Extension Gets Involved in the Blanchard

OSU Extension Involved in Blanchard River Watershed Management Efforts

By Candace Pollock - OSU Extension

FINDLAY, Ohio -- Watersheds, areas of land that drain into water sources such as rivers or streams, are the foundation on which a sustainable environment is built. But they can also be weak spots for communities faced with weather-related events.

Northwest and North central Ohio were in the spotlight earlier this year when rainfall swamped the Blanchard River watershed, which serves the regions, and inundated communities for several days. Now Ohio State University Extension has joined forces with state and local organizations and leaders to find ways to effectively manage the watershed, while protecting life and property.

"On August 21, the Blanchard River watershed received between 7 to 9 inches of rainfall followed the next day by another 1.5 to 3 inches of rain. The impact of that much rainfall in a short period of time was tremendous flooding in Findlay and Ottawa, a national disaster, resulting in thousands of people out of their homes and businesses and lost property," said Jim Hoorman, an OSU Extension water quality specialist at OSU Extension Center at Lima in Hancock County. "The probability of this much rainfall falling at one time is once in 100 years. However, many people are questioning what measures should be taken to reduce the impacts from flooding."

The answer, says OSU Extension educators, lies in properly managing watersheds by encouraging environmentally responsible land use practices.

Hoorman and Robert McCall, an OSU Extension watershed educator at OSU Extension Center at Lima, are part of the Blanchard River Watershed Partnership (BRWP). The BRWP is made up of communities in Putnam, Hancock, Hardin, and Allen counties that are working to find effective, economically feasible agricultural, environmental, and social solutions to watershed management.

The Blanchard River headwaters begin in Kenton. From Kenton, the river falls 90 feet and goes north to the Findlay reservoir, then flowing west through Findlay and Ottawa. From Findlay, the river falls 2 feet before hitting Ottawa, then draining into the Auglaize and Maumee rivers, and finally into Lake Erie. Along the main stem of the Blanchard River are several tributaries of various sizes, each with unique characteristics that contribute to water quality and quantity issues important to the watershed. It is such geographical characteristics that also pose problems for communities within the watershed region.

"The Blanchard watershed situation is analogous to Findlay sitting in a divot atop a green of a golf course," said McCall. "Northwest Ohio has a very flat topography. When rain falls in the southern part of the Blanchard watershed, runoff accumulates in Findlay. In many parts of the region there is also a clay layer beneath the soil surface that limits water from percolating through the soil profile. The bowl effect of our topography accompanied by the limiting clay layer exacerbates water quality and quantity problems in our watershed." McCall said that the severe flooding that occurred in the region in August was the result of a combination of too much rain over too short of a period of time and watershed surface degradation, causing the water to run-off rather than percolating into the soil. "It has been scientifically proven that as a watershed approaches 10 percent impervious surface, water quality begins to degrade. As impervious surfaces begin accumulating, surface run-off increases in quantity and velocity because it has nowhere else to go except as runoff into a drainage system, over farm fields and home lawns, and across driveways, roads and sidewalks," said McCall. "As velocity increases, so does soil erosion. In Findlay, the bowl effect has exacerbated our water quality and quantity problems causing the flooding we have recently experienced."

The assimilative capacity of pollutants in a watershed is a strong indicator of soil, water quality, biological diversity, and human impacts to the ecosystem. Watershed health is critical in maintaining a functioning ecosystem, as well as serving as a place for recreational use.

"Many watersheds, like the Blanchard, can be compared to a patient with chronic health problems. There are many doctors and specialists that can help in diagnosing and prescribing treatment for improved health," said McCall. "Those doctors and specialists come in the form of stakeholders with varying interests. Some are at the federal, state and local levels. Those doctors and specialists often become partners in a watershed group like the Blanchard River Watershed Partnership to serve as a team of doctors and specialists to help the patient get healthier."

The goal of the watershed group is to develop a watershed management plan that identifies problem areas and offers solutions through best management practices identified by the watershed community, both in rural and urban areas, and to maintain the health of the Blanchard River Watershed. Such practices in urban areas can include bio-retention areas within parking lots, pervious pavers, rain gardens, rooftop gardens and rain barrels. In rural areas, some practices can include conservation and no-till farming practices, buffer strips, cover crop production, and wetland management.

Future articles will continue to appear in the WLEB Bulletin from Ohio State University Extension that will address those rural and urban management practices and how communities can get more involved in the process.

For more information about the Blanchard River Watershed Partnership, log on at <http://www.blanchardriver.com>, or contact Robert McCall at (419) 422-6106 or e-mail mccall.57@cfaes.osu.edu.

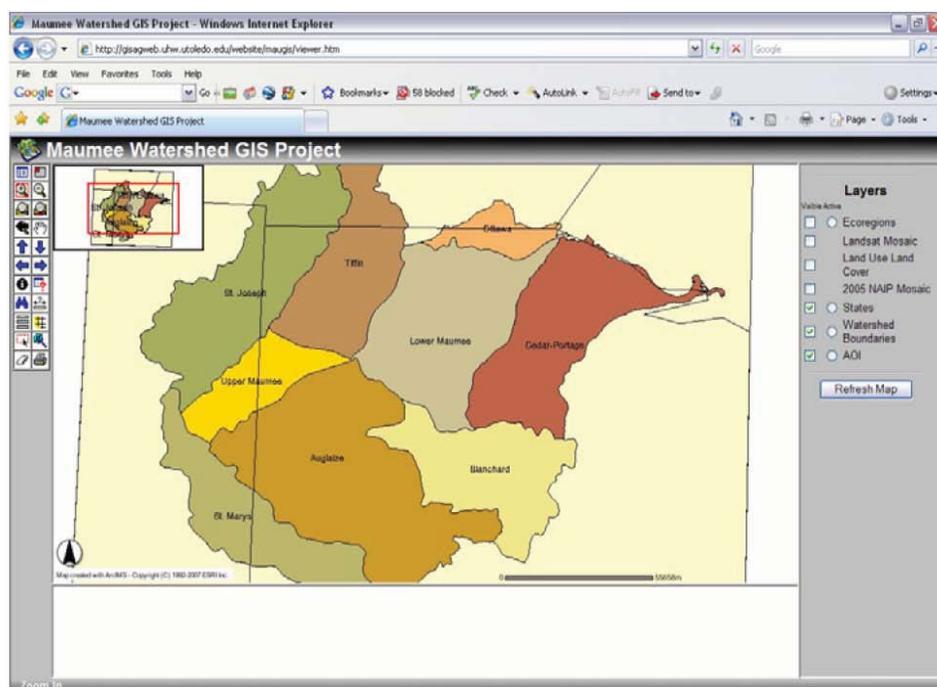
WLEB Project - University of Toledo's GIS Database

In October 2005, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) entered into a five year Memorandum of Understanding with the Geographic Information Science & Applied Geography (GISAG) Research Center of the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Toledo. This agreement brought UT into the WLEB project to assist NRCS in implementing sub-watershed rapid resource assessments, watershed and area planning, on farm conservation planning as well as delivery of conservation technical assistance and conservation cost-share programs authorized by the Farm Bill that are of mutual interest to University of Toledo and NRCS. Work performed in support of the Maumee Watershed Project and the Farm Bill conservation programs includes:

1) *Annually determining land cover and crop rotations via remote sensing techniques.*

2) *Combining Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan data layers to establish Maumee Watershed Project Area GIS data layers for the project.*

3) *Establish and maintain a Maumee Watershed Project GIS website to provide educational and information outreach to share the data and information with other project partners, resource managers, and the general public.*



The GIS website is perhaps the most visible outcome of this effort to date. The screen shot here shows the simple mapping tool available on the site. This tool does not require a special program to run, only a web browser, such as Internet Explorer. You can visit the GIS website by going to <http://www.maumee.utoledo.edu/>.

Frequently Asked Questions

QUESTION: I have been looking for information about the WLEB Partnership, where should I go to find more?

ANSWER: Start with www.wleb.org. Our website is the best place to learn about the basin, and to find links to many local organizations and initiatives.

QUESTION: I have an issue that I want to make sure the US Army Corps of Engineers considers when they study my watershed, how do I get their attention?

ANSWER: Your best bet is to visit www.wleb.org and click on the "Public Outreach" tab. There you will find the "Stakeholder Input Form." You can also email your comments to wlebhlp@wleb.org - we will be sure to route them to the proper agency, USACE, or otherwise.

QUESTION: I'm a Michigan fan, and I feel like a little extra sediment headed downstream is the least I can do for that state to the south. Is this wrong?

ANSWER: Yes. Please don't take your dislike for the Buckeyes out on Lake Erie. Watersheds don't know political boundaries, so this is one area where Buckeyes, Wolverines, and Hoosiers need to work hand in hand.

Strategic Plan Accomplishments

continued - Other completed action items include:

GOAL: Coordinate WLEB efforts with the Great Lakes Regional Work Group and the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration to share information and support where possible, common priorities.

ACTION ITEM: Align WLEB Strategic Plan with the resource concerns adopted by the Regional Work Group and the Collaboration.

GOAL: Develop one message and branding statement/tag line for the Western Lake Erie Basin Partnership for promotion.

ACTION ITEM: Develop for leadership committee adoption, a WLEB tag line/branding statement.

Our tag line:
**Healthy Land -
 Healthy Lake**

GOAL: Secure additional professional communications assistance for the outreach committee.

ACTION ITEM: Investigate the options and opportunities available to provide additional resources to the outreach committee via an existing partner, a new partner, or a private firm.

The WLEB Bulletin - A Tour

continued - Here is a run down of the regular features you can expect in the *WLEB Bulletin*.

Regular Feature	Description
Partner Focus	We will discuss one of the Partnership members - what their organization does, and what their role is within the partnership.
What You Can Do	To help landowners within the basin get involved, we will offer a tip each issue for homeowners. These tips will help them reduce their impact on their environment, including the Lake Erie's Western Basin!
Strategic Plan Accomplishments	Debuting in this issue, we will regularly feature updates to the status of the Strategic Plan action items.
Sub-Watershed Updates	The WLEB is a vast area. We will look at one sub-watershed at a time. The NRCS and USACE are both completing sub-watershed level assessments. We will share information on the physical nature of each sub-watershed, as well as information on local watershed groups.
WLEB Projects	There are a variety of projects underway as a part of the WLEB effort. Some of these are due to the WLEB Partnership, others are parallel efforts of the WLEB partners, or other stakeholder organizations. This section will help fit all of these projects into the larger context of Lake Erie protection and restoration.
Frequently Asked Questions	Throughout the WLEB process - the assessments, public meetings, project implementation, etc. - there will be a variety of questions that will be asked repeatedly. These questions and the answers here, as well as on the website, will help everyone better understand the many parts of this project.
Calendar of Events	Have an event you want to publicize? Looking for ways to get involved in the WLEB? Either way, the <i>Calendar of Events</i> is meant for you.

What You Can Do - *Spring Rains... Put Them to Good Use*

Any more it seems that water just isn't spread out evenly across the country. Places like Georgia are dry to the bone, while Missouri, Ohio, and other states are dealing with regular flooding. Climate change is on the news almost daily, and with the launch of EcoTrack 11, the WLEB partnership is helping people understand and take action to benefit their environment & community.

As the soggy late winter months roll into the potentially even soggy spring months, concerns over flooding and water quantity become a part of our daily lives. And while managing water quantity is important, it is just as important that we find ways to manage water quality too. Simply pushing water downstream to your neighbor may solve your problem, but you are creating a headache for someone else. Not to mention that we all live downstream of someone, so the last thing you want is more water coming your way from your upstream neighbors.

The question becomes, what is one to do with all that excess water this spring? Here are two simple solutions that we think can help you manage water on your property, and beautify your home at the same time!

Rain gardens and rain barrels are quickly becoming household terms. Within the City of Toledo, the Rain Garden Initiative is raising awareness through action, including providing funding to help with the installation of rain gardens. A recently completed program in the western basin also helped homeowners purchase rain barrels at a discount. Each of these practices has their place on the landscape, and together, they can help you manage your stormwater on your property. We hope the comparison below will help you understand the two practices, and which may work best for you... maybe you can even use both!

RAIN GARDEN OR RAIN BARREL, WHICH IS BEST FOR YOU?

RAIN GARDENS

- A garden that is developed as part of your landscaping.
- Planted in a low spot that catches stormwater.
- Can include formally arranged plants, fields of wildflowers, and various other features.
- Deep-rooted plants that like wet soils will thrive.
- An attractive option for slowing rainwater and filtering pollutants.
- Should be kept at least 10' from the foundation of your house.
- For more, visit the Rain Garden Initiative at www.raingardeninitiative.org

RAIN BARRELS

- The collection of rainwater in barrels dates back as far as 2,000 years ago.
- A 50-80 gallon barrel is most common.
- There are many designs to match your landscaping.
- Water stored in the barrel can be used later to water your plants, especially during hot, dry months.
- Saves you money by reducing your need to pay for water used to irrigate your landscaping.
- Works best when tied to the downspout, and kept against your house - great for small spaces.
- For more, visit the Rain Barrel Guide at www.rainbarrelguide.com

Information taken from: Rain Garden Initiative and Rain Barrel Guide

Sub-Watershed Focus *The St. Joseph River Watershed*

The St. Joseph River Watershed, located in northeast Indiana, northwest Ohio, and south central Michigan, is an 8-digit (04100003) hydrologic unit code (HUC) watershed encompassing 694,400 acres. With its headwaters in Hillsdale County, Michigan, the St. Joseph River flows in a southwestern direction through Williams County, Ohio; Defiance County, Ohio; DeKalb County, Indiana; and Allen County, Indiana, before converging with the St. Mary's River in Fort Wayne, Indiana to form the Maumee River. Both Noble County and Steuben County contribute water to the St. Joseph River, through Cedar Creek and Fish Creek tributaries. The St. Joseph is a wide and relatively slow-flowing stream with an average bottom slope of 1.6 feet per mile, following the Fort Wayne moraine.

Of the 694,400 acres in the watershed, Indiana occupies 56% of the watershed, while Michigan and Ohio each occupy 22%. The watershed is primarily agricultural, with approximately 64% in cropland and 15% in pasture or forage. Woodlands and wetlands are found on 10%, while the remaining 11% consist of urban, farmsteads, rural residences, airports, golf courses, and other land uses. The St. Joseph River serves as the drinking water supply for nearly 250,000 people in Fort Wayne and New Haven, Indiana.



Identified water quality threats in the St. Joseph River Watershed include sediment in storm water runoff originating from agricultural fields and construction areas; bacteria and nutrients, particularly from failing septic systems, CSOs, livestock operations, and nuisance wildlife such as geese; pesticide spikes from agricultural operations; and nutrients from agricultural and urban/suburban fertilizer applications.

Watershed Initiative Partnership

The St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative Partnership (SJRWI), founded in 1996, is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that is made up of local citizens, organizations, businesses, and agencies from across the region, working together to take a proactive approach to water quality problems by promoting land use practices that are both economically and environmentally compatible. The SJRWI's Board of Directors consists of members from across Indiana, Ohio and Michigan.

The SJRWI has been active in three programmatic areas:

- (1) Outreach education, including weekly water quality monitoring which has been performed across the watershed during the recreational season since 1996;*
- (2) placement of Best Management Practices (BMP) on the land; and*
- (3) watershed management planning.*

For more information contact:

www.sjrwi.net

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SWCD/NRCS Hire WLEB Staff

NRCS has partnered with local SWCDs, Indiana State Dept. of Agriculture, Michigan Dept. of Agriculture, The Nature Conservancy, The Joyce Foundation, and other partners to establish new field positions in the WLEB watershed. The multicounty positions will provide technical assistance to assist landowners in conservation planning and in implementing USDA Farm Bill programs. Six of the conservations are shared by SWCDs in the Ohio portion of the watershed, three are located in Michigan and two in Indiana.

The positions were implemented via an agreement with the host SWCD in Ohio and Michigan. In Indiana the agreement is with the State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), however these two state employed conservationists work out of SWCD offices. Each agreement is for a 3-year period and specifies the majority of the conservationist's time will be devoted to Farm Bill program implementation and support of WLEB project activities. Local SWCDs employ the conservationists, provide office space, transportation, administrative supervision, and have agreed that the positions will operate on a multicounty basis. Each position covers two to four counties.

Conservationists and their host counties

OHIO:

Julie Rutschilling, Auglaize SWCD
Mike Degens, Williams SWCD
Ryan Evers, Van Wert SWCD
Jason Roehrig, Defiance SWCD
Jeremy Gerwin, Wood SWCD
Dominic Goshe, Hancock SWCD

INDIANA:

Katy Stoller, Adams SWCD
Ross Egenolf, Allen SWCD

MICHIGAN:

Sarah Zeiler, Hillsdale SWCD
Lauren Lindemann, Lenawee SWCD
Nathan McNett, Lenawee SWCD

Partnership Meeting Held April 3rd



LTC Hurley, Findlay Mayor Pete Sehnert, and Northwest Ohio Flood Mitigation Partnership CEO Tony Iriti celebrate the signing of a federal cost share agreement. The agreement puts the USACE to work on a feasibility study of the River in Findlay. The agreement was signed during the WLEB Partnership meeting on April 3, 2008 at North Cape Yacht Club in LaSalle, Michigan. For more about the meeting, visit www.wleb.org and click on the Meetings/Calendars link.

CALENDAR

June 5, 2008

Ohio Lake Erie Commission Meeting
Ohio Dept of Agriculture - 8995 Main St,
Reynoldsburg, Ohio. Tour of the Dept's
laboratories will follow the meeting.

July 9, 2008

2008 Great Lakes Manure Handling Expo,
Molly Caren Agricultural Center, 135 SR 38
NE, London, Ohio. 43140. For more in-
formation contact Jon Rausch at 614-292-
4504, e-mail rausch.7@osu.edu

Submit events to our web
calendar at www.wleb.org