Columbus’ Watershed Master Plan will benefit 1.1 million central Ohioans.

Working to protect Columbus’ drinking water while also managing costs

High nitrate levels at a Columbus water plant recently led to a two-week, no-drink advisory for pregnant women and infants younger than 6 months old. Preventing such problems drives the city of Columbus’ new, in-development Watershed Master Plan.

Consultancy CDM Smith leads the effort with help from, among others, specialists from Ohio State University Extension. Myra Moss and Joe Bonnell, plus faculty emeritus Bill Grunkemeyer, are helping the firm identify and prioritize agricultural activities in the Scioto River, Big Walnut Creek, and Alum Creek watersheds that could impact water reaching the city’s water plants. The three specialists have unique expertise in water issues, sustainable planning and consensus building.

Protecting Columbus’ watersheds “will help control treatment and reservoir operation costs and reduce risks in delivering safe drinking water,” said CDM Smith’s Julie McGill.

“The fewer contaminants entering the water plants,” said Bonnell, Extension’s watershed management program director, “the less technology — and money — required to remove those contaminants.”

More: columbus.gov/watershed

“OSU Extension brings deep, unique experience in working with the agricultural community, developing comprehensive plans and delivering educational programs aimed at changing public behavior. This lets them reach out to farmers and other stakeholders with simple, straightforward dialogue that can change mindsets.”

— Julie McGill, water resources engineer, CDM Smith

ESSENTIALS

• Columbus’ Watershed Master Plan stands to benefit 1.1 million central Ohioans by safeguarding their drinking water sources and spending their water revenues wisely.

• Columbus’ main drinking water sources, the Scioto River and Big Walnut Creek, receive runoff from 1,200-plus square miles of land, 72 percent of which is agricultural, before reaching the city’s Dublin Road and Hap Cremean water plants.

• Runoff of fertilizer from farmland can be a major source of nitrates in the Scioto River.

• Other challenges when treating Columbus’ water include atrazine, a weed killer; Cryptosporidium, a protozoan sometimes in manure runoff and failing septic systems; and phosphorus from fertilizer, which can contribute to harmful algal blooms.

Hoover Reservoir is a major source of water for Columbus. The 20 billion-gallon impoundment is in a rapidly growing area north of the city.
WE CONNECT WITH PEOPLE IN ALL STAGES OF LIFE.
We work with families and children, farmers and business owners, and community leaders and elected officials to build better lives, better businesses and better communities that make Ohio great. We do this through a focus on the following impact areas.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
We teach people how to apply research in their daily lives in order for them to make informed choices about everything from finances to healthy living to food safety.

PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS
Our 4-H youth development program delivers skills in leadership, communications, math, science and research to 216,000 young Ohioans. Ohio 4-H extends its reach through special in-school, after-school and summer programs.

ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Ohio’s diverse agricultural, horticultural and forestry industries contribute $105 billion to the state’s economy every year. We assist with technology, marketing and educational support, protecting Ohio’s position in the global marketplace. We also work to enhance the environment, water quality and natural resources in the state — balancing economic progress with environmental sustainability.

ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OPPORTUNITIES
Our economic, small business and job development programs are tailored to local community needs in every county, whether metropolitan, rural or a combination of both.

OSU Extension’s mission
Engaging people to strengthen their lives and communities through research-based educational programming

Locally based, jointly funded
We are the university’s community-based research and outreach arm, delivering knowledge from The Ohio State University to every county in Ohio.
We are jointly funded through a line item in the State of Ohio’s budget, through county funds and through the federal government. We do not receive funding from student tuition.

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