January 23, 2023

During their January 19 session, the Carroll County Commissioners adopted a resolution proclaiming January as Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Commissioners Christopher Modranski, Robert Wirkner, and Donald Leggett were joined by Kristi Campbell-Meiser, Community Engagement Coordinator for COMPASS, a group that provides services to victims of human trafficking.

Photo courtesy of Commissioner Chris Modranski's Twitter (@cmodranski)

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Deadline to apply for LATCF Funds approaching

The deadline for eligible counties to apply for Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund (LATCF) payments is January 31, 2023. CCAO highly encourages counties that are eligible apply for these funds to bring additional funds to their communities. These funds can be treated as general revenue funds, as they can be used for "any governmental purpose other than lobbying activities."

According to a recent publication by NACo, the following Ohio counties are eligible for LATCF funds but have not yet applied:

- Athens County
- Belmont County
- Carroll County
- Clark County
- Cuyahoga County
- Fayette County
- Gallia County
- Harrison County
- Jackson County
- Jefferson County
- Lake County
- Lucas County
- Madison County
- Mahoning County
- Meigs County
- Morrow County
- Stark County
- Warren County

CCAO Survey: County broadband projects

CCAO is conducting a brief survey of county-led broadband projects to provide information to BroadbandOhio regarding counties that have, currently are, or will be pursuing broadband projects.

As a result of numerous conversations with BroadbandOhio and other broadband groups, CCAO would like to gather some information about broadband projects in Ohio's counties. The results of this survey will be shared with BroadbandOhio to enhance their understanding of the broadband landscape in Ohio's counties. The information will assist CCAO with our advocacy work surrounding broadband and hopefully lead to increased opportunities for technical and financial assistance moving forward.

You can access the survey here. Please respond to the survey by February 3rd.

Thank you for your help!

Save the Date! New Member Training to be held February 27 - March 1

New Member Training is coming February 27, 28 and March 1 at the DoubleTree in Columbus! All members, new and experienced, are encouraged and invited to attend.

Early-bird registration pricing is available until February 19! Register by February 19 for the full training at a price of $250 and for single-day (any of the three days are eligible for single-day registration) for $150. After February 19 these prices will increase to $300 and $200, respectively.

You can reserve rooms at the DoubleTree for a reduced price through the CCAO's event portal, accessible here. Reduced rates are only available until February 13.

Registration can be completed here or through the link on the event page on CCAO's website.

A draft agenda for the training has also been released. Please note that time slots and sessions are subject to change.

We hope to see you in Columbus for the event! If you have questions, please contact Robin Garrett at rgarrett@ccao.org.

Happy birthday Holmes County!

The county is named after Andrew Holmes, an officer in the War of 1812 who died during the Battle of Mackinac Island. The exact reason why the county was named after Holmes is uncertain, but it is believed that a man named John Harris, who served under Holmes during the war, later settled in the area and may have suggested the name to honor his fallen superior officer.

Holmes County was created out of land formerly belonging to Coshocton, Tuscarawas, and Wayne counties. Holmes County is one of a handful of counties in Ohio that has not undergone any boundary changes since its establishment.

According to a population survey conducted by Elizabethtown College, Ohio State University, and the Heritage Historical Library in Ontario, the Greater Holmes County Amish community is the second-largest Amish community in the world, behind only the Lancaster community in Pennsylvania.

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Baldridge nominated for Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture

On Friday, Governor Mike DeWine announced he will nominate Representative Brian Baldridge to be the next Director of Agriculture.

Representative Baldridge is in his second term in the Ohio House of Representatives representing Adams, Brown, and Scioto counties.

Before being elected to the House, Baldridge served as an Adams County Commissioner for four terms and served on the CCAO Board of Directors from 2016-2018.

Baldridge and his family operate a family farm and he is a seventh-generation farmer.

CCAO congratulates Representative Baldridge on his nomination and, if confirmed, is excited to work with him on agricultural issues facing counties.

SNAP emergency allotment to end in February

On January 5, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services sent a letter to county JFS directors regarding the end of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) emergency allotments. You can read the full letter here. A summary is provided below.

As part of the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic, states were allowed to request emergency allotments for households participating in SNAP. These allotments would end either at the conclusion of the federal public health emergency or until the state ended the program. Ohio has been providing the emergency allotments since March 2020.

Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, states are no longer permitted to issue emergency allotments after February 2023, meaning households receiving SNAP benefits will receive only their normal allotments.

In many cases this will cause a dramatic decrease in the SNAP allotment individuals and households will receive. For example, the minimum allotment for an individual under SNAP is $23 per month. During the period of emergency allotments, such an individual has been receiving an additional $258 per month, for a total of $281 per month. Beginning in March, this individual will receive only the original $25, an approximately 91% decrease.

For those households on SNAP, particularly those who had not been receiving SNAP before the pandemic, the cessation of emergency allotments will have a substantial effect on their monthly budgets.

This will be a difficult time for residents of your counties and for your job and family services staff. We encourage our members to read the letter attached above and begin coordinating with the applicable county departments to help inform your community about the impending change to minimize the surprise that this may have on Ohioans.

NACo is accepting applications for 2023 Achievement Awards

On December 19, NACo officially put out the call for applications for NACo Achievement Awards. The award program, entering its 53rd year, celebrates outstanding county government programs and services.

Achievement Award winners will be featured in County News, NACo's primary newsletter, and will be honored at NACo's Annual Conference. The recognition is also useful for highlighting important projects to your local community.

The awards cover 18 program categories, such as Children and Youth, Criminal Justice and Public Safety, Health, Human Services, Planning, Transportation, and more.

In 2022, Ohio counties received 28 Achievement Awards. You can view a full list of NACo Achievement Award winners dating back to 2009 at NACo's award database.

The deadline to submit applications is April 7, 2023, with applications received before March 3 receiving $25 off the application fee.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

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Visit the Grants and Funding Opportunities page on the CCAO website for a detailed listing of open grant programs.

BroadbandOhio webinar to be held on Wednesday

On Wednesday at 9:30 a.m., CCAO will be hosting a webinar by Peter Voderberg, Chief of BroadbandOhio. BroadbandOhio is the office within the Department of Development that is spearheading the effort to bring high-speed internet service to every Ohioan.

The webinar will provide an overview of the current broadband development landscape in Ohio, a discussion of how the state is working with the FCC on the internet connectivity mapping process, and federal and state programs that counties may be able to take advantage of.

You can register through the link above or here.

Final week for public water system equipment grant program applications

The H2Ohio Public Water System Equipment Grant is now accepting applications. The program is open only to community public water systems and is intended to assist these water systems with purchasing vital equipment.

Equipment the funds may be used for include valve exercising equipment, pressure loggers, metal pipe locators, listening devices to detect leaks, and clamp-on flow meters to ensure the meters are accurate. Training costs for the above equipment is also an eligible expense.

Other equipment may be requested and may be approved on a case-by-case basis.

Applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. January 25. Award determinations will be issued by the Ohio EPA within 90 days of the close date. If you have questions regarding the program, please contact DDAGW.Grants@epa.ohio.gov.

SAM.gov, federal grant portal, walkthrough available

Last month, the US General Services Administration hosted an online forum to help walk state and local officials through how to use SAM.gov. The website is the primary portal for intergovernmental assistance from the federal government to state and local governments.

The Administration has made the presentation slide deck and the recording of the session available for download, as well as a one-page guide.

ARPA and BIL RESOURCES

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This section of Counties Current will be a permanent fixture for the foreseeable future to help counties with the ins and outs of the American Rescue Plan Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. These two laws provide a once-in-a-generation investment.

Resources for ARPA Reporting and Compliance

The most recent version of the US Treasury Reporting Guidance was published September 20, 2022. Counties and other local governments with populations greater than 250,000 or ARPA distributions greater than $10 million are required to file Project and Expenditure Reports no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter throughout the grant period. Other recipients will file Project and Expenditure Reports annually by April 30.

Members are urged to consult resources from US Treasury, NACo, and the Ohio Office of Budget and Management for more information about reporting and how to use ARPA funds. CCAO maintains a list of ARPA links and resources, including a comparison of state and federal procurement laws, at the ARPA Resources page.

Ohio Ethics Commission issues statement regarding stimulus funds

Last week the Ohio Ethics Commission released a statement ensuring that public officials are aware that stimulus funds, such as those received under the federal American Rescue Plan Act and the funds that communities will receive under Governor Mike DeWine's Appalachian investment program, are public funds and that conflict of interest laws must be observed.

To that effect, the Commission also recirculated its Advisory Opinion No. 2009-006, issued in 2009 regarding stimulus funds made available to governments under the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. It provides a more in-depth examination of potential conflicts of interest with stimulus funds, including a discussing regarding vendors.

CCAO encourages members refamiliarize themselves with this Advisory Opinion and conflict of interest laws to ensure good stewardship of ARPA and Appalachia funds.

Guidance and overview of available BIL funding available from NACo and the Ohio Department of Transportation

NACo and ODOT each host a resource page providing information to counties about the Bipartican Infrastructure Law. The pages are rich with information including multiple tables providing overviews and links to funding opportunities, a timeline of upcoming grant programs, and much more.

The NACo website can be found here and the ODOT website can be found here.

CCAO strongly encourages counties to frequently visit the sites and apply for funding through the myriad of programs to bring valuable federal funds to Ohio communities.

COUNTY NEWS

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Each week Counties Current highlights the happenings in our counties in the words of their local media. One county from each of the CCAO's five districts is highlighted.

Northwest District

Commissioners prepare for 4th floor courthouse asbestos project

Bryan Times, January 14, 2023

County commissioners met Thursday to tour their now-vacant fourth floor county courthouse offices in preparation for an asbestos remediation project. In preparation for the project, the commissioners on Thursday toured their now-vacant fourth floor county courthouse offices, making preliminary determinations on what furniture and fixtures to keep and what to offer at auction, along with discussing what the possible final configurations may look like after renovations.

Asbestos has been confirmed within the walls and ceilings of the courthouse's fourth floor, where commission staff had their offices and commissioners held their weekly meetings. Commissioners and staff beginning last summer relocated on a temporary basis to the county East Annex office building at 1425 E. High St., Bryan.

Northeast District

Cuyahoga County Council discusses 'threats' to finances, including demands of jail

Cleveland.com, January 17, 2023

Cuyahoga County Council is already taking stock of a number of potential "threats" to the future budget amid an uncertain economy and several pending multimillion-dollar capital projects, including building a new jail and courthouse and possible investments in the Browns' stadium.

Right now, the county's general fund is "in very good shape," with an estimated year-end balance of $335.6 million, Councilman Dale Miller told members of the Finance and Budget Committee on Tuesday.

The Health and Human Services levy budget also remains in "decent shape," he said, though the projected year-end balance of $26.4 million is just slightly under the reserve requirement of $27 million.

Central District

Franklin County ex-pathologists may get $225k in contract extensions

Columbus Dispatch, January 16, 2022

Franklin County commissioners will consider a request at their meeting Tuesday to extend three contracts totaling $225,000, with three former forensic pathologists to help with autopsy cases in which they were involved.

Four of the county's five pathologists resigned in January 2022, forcing the county coroner's office to spend millions in contracts with Montgomery and other counties and private firms to handle autopsies. As part of Franklin County's efforts to address the growing backlog, it also contracted with three of its former deputy coroners to help on cases they oversaw.

In March, the county contracted with Drs. Anne Shepler, Kevin B. Jenkins and Maneesah Pandey for $75,000 each to provide legal depositions and court testimony in connection with autopsies in which they were involved. Their rates ranged from $350-$550 an hour for background work to $500-$600 an hour for depositions and court testimony, according to their contracts.

Southwest District

County planner lays out short, long-term goals for the county

Chillicothe Gazette, January 17, 2023

County planner Devon Shoemaker visited the Ross County Commissioners this month to discuss short and long-term plans for the county.

Shoemaker said that factors like the possible World Heritage destination at the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, planned local and regional scale development and the housing and workforce demand "creates tremendous potential for growth in Ross County."

To accommodate the growing need in the county, Shoemaker said he hopes to grow the planning department and evolve the way the department operates with other entities within the county.

"We're looking at a unified approach, a coordinated approach. Everything from infrastructure, residential, commercial industrial development, to community development in Ross County," Shoemaker said. "We want a one-stop shop for development."

Southeast District

Jefferson County eyes community beneficial projects for remaining ARPA funding

WTOV9, January 19, 2023

Jefferson county has roughly $2.1 million remaining of initial $12 million it received in American Rescue Plan Act funding.

County Auditor EJ Conn says they were able to do their yearly revenue loss calculation, which shows the remaining money may be utilized under revenue replacement, allowing for more brick-and-mortar projects.

"Any time we can devote money toward projects that can benefit our county, the better it's going to be for the residents of the county. It's been exciting to see," he said.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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JANUARY 25
WEBINAR: UPDATE ON BROADBAND (register here)

FEBRUARY 10
CORSA BOARD MEETING

FEBRUARY 11 - 14
NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE (Washington, D.C.)

FEBRUARY 24
CEBCO BOARD MEETING

FEBRUARY 27 - MARCH 1
NEW MEMBER TRANINING (CCAO BOARD MEETING ON THE 27TH)

DID YOU KNOW?

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Harrison County

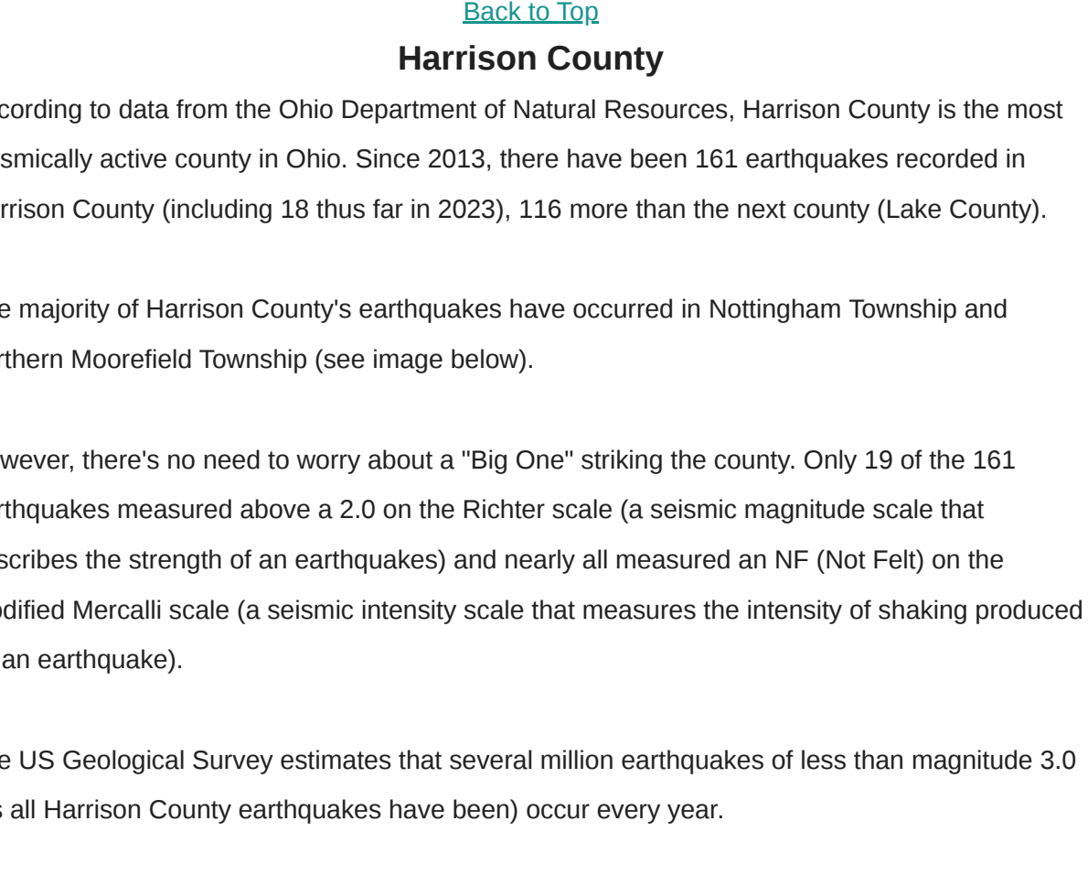
According to data from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Harrison County is the most seismically active county in Ohio. Since 2013, there have been 161 earthquakes recorded in Harrison County (including 18 thus far in 2023), 116 more than the next county (Lake County).

The majority of Harrison County's earthquakes have occurred in Nottingham Township and northern Moorefield Township (see image below).

However, there's no need to worry about a "Big One" striking the county. Only 19 of the 161 earthquakes measured above a 2.0 on the Richter scale (a seismic magnitude scale that describes the strength of an earthquakes) and nearly all measured an NF (Not Felt) on the Modified Mercalli scale (a seismic intensity scale that measures the intensity of shaking produced by an earthquake).

The US Geological Survey estimates that several million earthquakes of less than magnitude 3.0 (as all Harrison County earthquakes have been) occur every year.

You can view a list of Ohio earthquakes and an interactive map on the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' webpage.



An export of ODNR's interactive map showing the earthquakes that have occurred in Harrison County since 2013.

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