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August 12, 2024

Congratulations to one of our corporate partners on the ribbon cutting of the new Rumpke Recycling & Resource Center! Lt. Governor Jon Husted and Franklin County Commissioner Kevin Boyce attended the event to celebrate this revolutionary facility.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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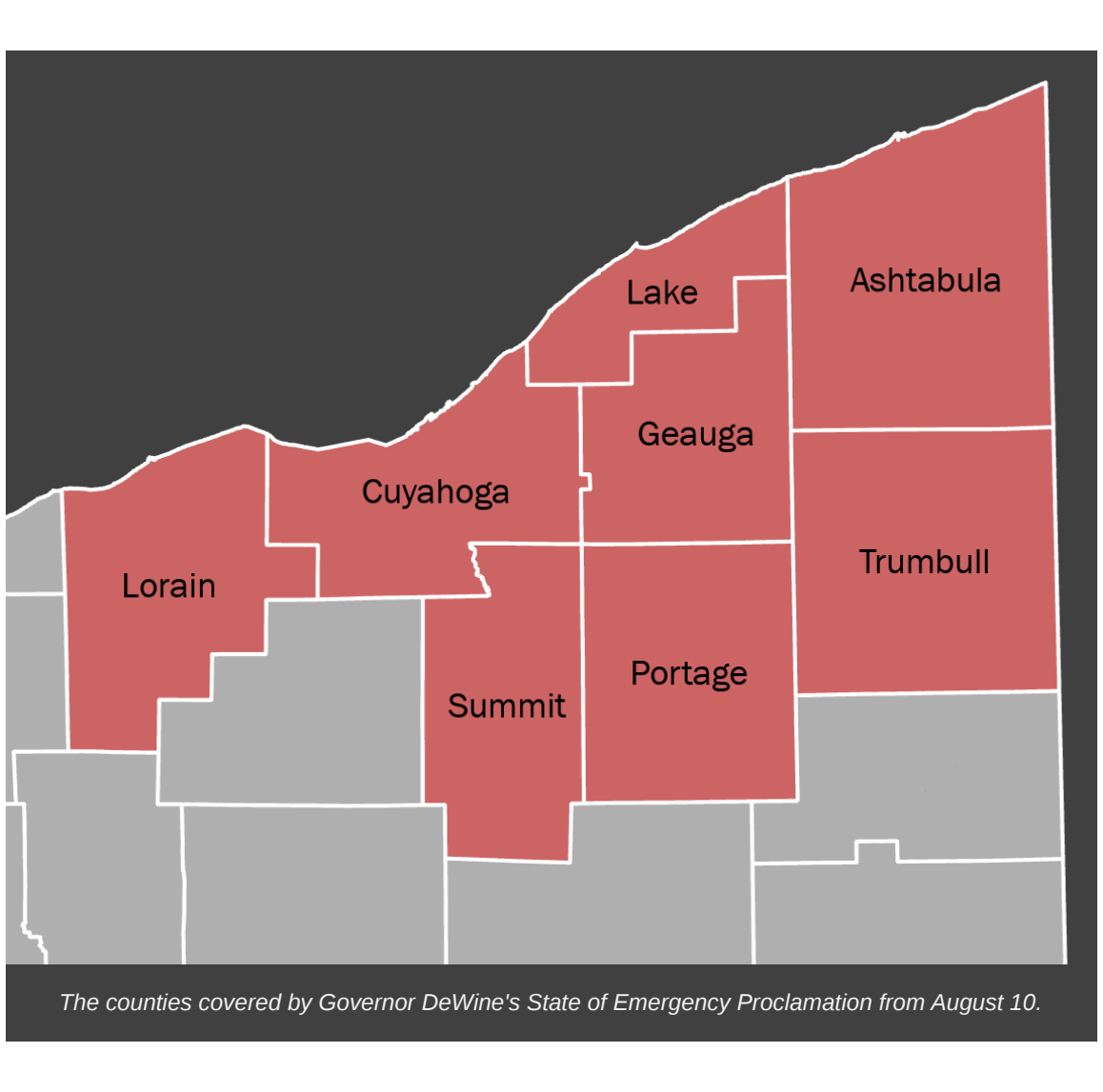
Governor declares state of emergency for northeastern counties

On Saturday, Governor Mike DeWine issued a state of emergency for several Northeast Ohio counties after a series of tornados and strong storms earlier last week. The counties in the declaration are Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Portage, Summit, and Trumbull counties.

The declaration will allow the state to expeditated assistance to the listed counties. So far, the state has provided assistance with acquiring mobile oxygen generators for Cuyahoga County.

The governor also directed the Ohio Emergency Management Director, Sima Merick, to request FEMA come to the area and conduct damage assessments.

The state has an Assistance Toolbox which includes a section dedicated for local governments to use in ongoing damage assessment efforts.



The counties covered by Governor DeWine's State of Emergency Proclamation from August 10.

Brownfield Remediation, Site Revitalization grants awarded

Last week the DeWine-Husted Administration announced the fourth round of awards under the Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program and the Demolition and Site Revitalization Program, both of which were created in 2021.

Brownfield Remediation
The grants awarded under the Brownfield Remediation Program last week total $106.9 million across 22 counties. The bulk of this funding is for cleanup/remediation projects ($102.4 million for 35 projects) while a smaller amount will be used for assessment projects ($4.5 million for 26 projects).

Many of the cleanup/remediation projects involve removing asbestos and other contaminated building materials from sites to help redevelop them for modern usage. For example, a project in Mahoning County will abate asbestos in the South High School Athletic Complex before demolishing the building and redeveloping the site as a community sports facility.

The operating budget allocated $175 million in both SFY 2024 and SFY 2025 for the program. With last week's awards, about $68.1 million remain from the SFY 2024 appropration. Each county has up to $1 million reserved, with the remaining funds allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

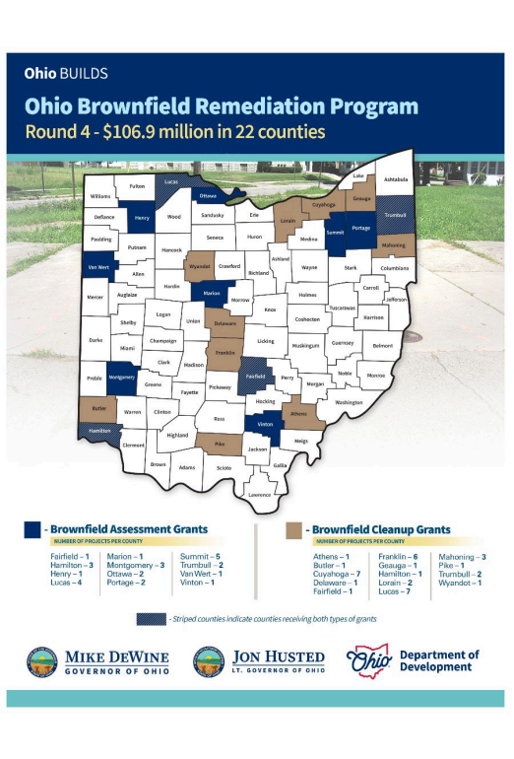
You can view the full list of last week's awards here.

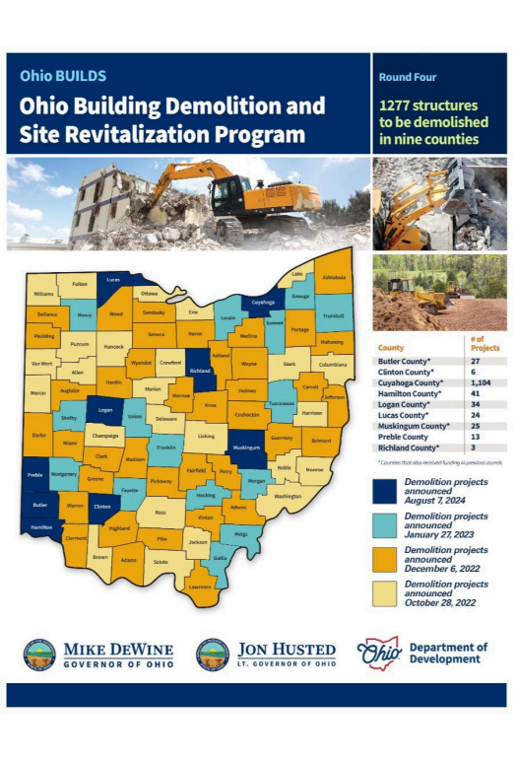
Demolition and Site Revitalization
The grants awarded under the Demolition and Site Revitalization Program last week total $67.3 million to demolish 1,277 buildings across eight counties.

One notable project is in Lucas County, where a blighted and vacant former banquet hall and golf course clubhouse will be demolished to expand the Toledo Metroparks.

The operating budget allocated $150 million for the program. With last week's awards, about $82.7 million remain. Each county has up to $500,000 reserved, with the remaining funds allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

A full list of addresses that will be demolished can be found here.


Ohio BUILDS
Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program
Round 4 - $106.9 million in 22 counties
Brownfield Assessment Grants
Brownfield Cleanup Grants
MIKE DEWINE GOVERNOR OF OHIO
JON HUSTED
Ohio Department of Development


Ohio BUILDS
Ohio Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program
Round Four
1277 structures to be demolished in nine counties
MIKE DEWINE GOVERNOR OF OHIO
JON HUSTED
Ohio Department of Development

REMINDER: All county staff must complete fraud reporting training September 28

All county commissioners, executives, council members, other county elected officials and all current county staff are required to complete a new, mandatory fraud reporting training through the Auditor of State's office by **September 28, 2024**. All public employees and elected officials are required to take the training once every 4 years.

Elected officials are unable to delegate this training to another employee and must complete the training themselves.

Any new county employees hired after September 28, 2024, must take the training within 30 days of the first day of employment and all elected officials must take the training within 30 days after taking office. The requirement is ongoing and training must be completed once every four years.

The training is a free, 8-minute video that is available on demand on the Auditor of State's website. Each elected official and county employee will register, watch the video, and then receive a certificate of completion. All certificates should be collected from employees and retained for audit.

The Auditor of State website includes FAQs and sample tools for tracking employee participation.

If you have questions regarding the training, you can contact the Auditor of State's office here.

RFP issued for third-party power supplies by Palmer Energy, CCAOSC

Palmer Energy Company, acting as the energy consultant for the CCAOSC collectively and the Counties, is issuing a Request for Proposal for third party power supplies.

If you have any questions concerning the RFP, please contact CCAO Assistant Director John Leutz at jleutz@ccao.org.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

PALMER
ENERGY COMPANY

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Developments on constitutional amendments pertaining to counties

Last week, the Ohio Supreme Court declined a motion to expeditated deliberations in lawsuit between Attorney General Dave Yost and campaigners for a constitutional amendment proposal to restrict qualified immunity.

The amendment proposal has been rejected by Attorney General Yost eight times for various reasons, including most recently for the filing lacking a title. The lawsuit claims Yost has changed the justification on blocking the amendment due to an objection to the subject matter.

An *en banc* review has been scheduled in the federal Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals for October.

The campaign for the amendment is hoping for a decision before the end of the year so it can begin gathering signatures to put the issue on the ballot in 2025.

You can read the most recent submission of the amendment proposal and Attorney General Yost's rejection notification on the AG's website.

Other News
In July, Attorney General Yost rejected the filing of a proposed amendment regarding property taxes due to lack of signatures. The Revised Code states that proposed constitutional amendments must include at least 1,000 signatures from qualified electors of a single county. In the event that signatures from multiple counties are submitted, the Secretary of State determines which county the majority of signatures came from and county only the signatures from that county.

Due to the petition only having 508 valid signatures, it was rejected without any consideration of the petition language.

The summary of the amendment would have severe implications on the ability of counties, as well as other local governments, to generate revenue to fund services. It would make the following changes to the property tax system:

- No government has the right to increase the taxable property value of private property or prosperities without the owner's agreement. This includes improvements made up to $50,000.
- Private property may only be reappraised when transferred through inheritance or sale. Transfers based on the death of a spouse to the spouse's surviving partner are exempt.
- Expands the homestead exemption to be universal for those above the age of 65, those who are totally and permanently disabled, armed services veterans who were honorably discharged and who are service-connected disabled, and any spouses of the above who are aged at least 59 years old.

While the petition was rejected at this time due to a signature shortage, CCAO will monitor any future resubmissions of this amendment proposal.

H2Ohio enrolls more farmland, including project in Delaware County

Last Monday, Governor DeWine and Department of Agriculture Director Brian Baldridge announced the enrollment of 500,000 acres into H2Ohio, bringing statewide enrollment to 2.2 million acres (about 8.4% of Ohio's total land area).

Originally, the H2Ohio program was intended only for agricultural producers in the Western Lake Erie Basion, but provisions in the most recent state operating budget have enabled the project to rollout statewide. Today, 75 counties have land enrolled in the program.

One of the newly enrolled projects is the O'Donnell Wetland Restoration and Treatment Train project in Delaware County. The project will restore and enhance seven wetlands in the county, creating a natural capture system for sediment, phosphorous, and nitrogen from nearby farmland.

The project, covering 250 acres, will also protect habitat for wildlife and plants. The sandhill crane, an endangered species, lives in the area.

H2Ohio
Statewide Enrollment
Producers across Ohio have enrolled 2.2 million acres into H2Ohio and are using Best Management Practices on the farm to improve water quality.
– Counties with Producers Enrolled
MIKE DEWINE GOVERNOR OF OHIO
Ohio Department of Agriculture
h2.ohio.gov

SERB releases latest edition of Cost of Health Insurance report

In late July, the State Employment Relations Board (SERB) released its 2024 edition of the Annual Cost of Health Insurance in Ohio's Public Sector Report. The report is the result of surveying Ohio's public employers regarding health insurance, plan design, and the cost to governments.

Two notable high-level findings in the report are that medical premiums are growing faster than wages and faster than inflation. In 2024, average wages in Ohio's public sector grew by 3.2% while medical premiums grew by 5.9% (for single premiums) and 6.2% (for family premiums). The inflation rate for 2024 was 3.4%, also well below the premium growth rate.

The report contains many more valuable insights on more focused analyses, such as premium differences between different insurance plan types, coverage differences in prescription insurance, and more. CCAO encourages counties familiarize themselves with the report.

Department of Aging to host Assisted Living Feedback forums across the state

Over the next month, the Department of Aging will be hosting eight Assisted Living Feedback Forums to foster communication between local leaders and community members regarding assisted living. The forums are structured in a similar way as the Nursing Home Quality and Accountability Task Force's listening sessions were, held last year. These forums will focus on another option for long-term care.

You can register for any of the eight events through this link.

The full schedule of events with addresses is below:

Dayton
Tuesday, August 13, 2024
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Sinclair Community College
Conference Center – Charity Auditorium
444 W. Third St., Dayton, Ohio 45402

West Chester/Cincinnati
Wednesday, August 14, 2024
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
MidPointe Library West Chester
Conference Rooms A/B
9363 Centre Point Drive, West Chester, Ohio 45069

Bowling Green
Tuesday, August 20, 2024
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Wood County Senior Center
140 S. Grove St, Bowling Green, Ohio 43402

Youngstown
Thursday, August 29, 2024
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Youngstown State University
Kilcawley Center – Chestnut Room
117 Tressel Way, Youngstown, Ohio 44555

Cleveland
Thursday, Sept. 5, 2024
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
The Conference Center at Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging
11890 Fairhill Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44120

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.

CCAO to hold Public Works Commission webinar on August 29

Later this month, on August 29, CCAO will host a webinar focusing on the Ohio Public Works Commission. The webinar will provide an overview of OPWC's infrastructure bond program, a grant and loan program that has been benefiting Ohio's local governments since 1988. The program's funding source must be reauthorized by voters every ten years and the current reauthorization period is coming to an end. The presentation will examine the history of reauthorization and the required process to put the issue on a forthcoming statewide ballot.

Linda Bailiff, Executive Director of OPWC, will give the presentation and be available to answer questions.

You can register for the webinar here. If you are encounter issues registering with the link, please contact Nedra Benson, CCAO Administrative Professional, at nbenson@ccao.org or call 614-221-5627, and provide her with your email address.

Local government cybersecurity grants available

CyberOhio, an initiative by the state to bolster cybersecurity in Ohio, has announced the opening of two grant opportunities for local governments.

First, the Cybersecurity Software and Services Grant is intended to assist local governments in acquiring security software and services. Examples include implementing multi-factor authentication, server protection programs, and more. Grants can be up to $20,000.

The second program is the .gov Migration Grant. This grant program is intended to assist local governments transition their websites and emails to the ".gov" type. This domain type is only available to U.S.-based government entities, allowing users to have more confidence that they are receiving genuine information and that the emails they may receive from government entities are legitimate. Grants under this program may be up to $9,500.

Applications for both programs are open until September 16. CCAO encourages counties to consider applying for these funds as the threat of cyber attacks will only increase going forward.

OLBA to host small county land bank summit in October

On October 3, the Ohio Land Bank Association (OLBA) will be hosting its inaugural Fall Land Bank Summit. The summit will focus on rural, small, and recently created land banks to helpful tools and provide training to new staff members.

The summit will be held in Mount Vernon. More information, including how to register and an event schedule, can be found on the OLBA's website.

COUNTY NEWS

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Each week Counties Current highlights the happenings in our counties in the words of their local media. One story from each of the CCAO's five districts is highlighted, and on occasion other stories may be highlighted as well.

Northwest District

Veterans Office headed to Litter Landing
The Courier, August 3, 2024
Hancock County Veterans Service Office will be moving into the former Litter Landing space after it is renovated, Veterans Service Executive Director Nichole Coleman said this week.

The agency currently is located at Riverview Executive Park (the former Kodak building), 1100 E. Main Cross St., Suite 123. County officials are hoping to relocate Veterans Services by November 2025. The green bins for the public to drop off recyclables will remain at the former Litter Landing site, she said.

The county commissioners plan to convert the eastern side of the 6,369 square-foot building — the side where people once dropped off recyclables — to offices, Coleman said. A small addition for employee bathrooms and a board room also is planned. The western side of the building will be converted to a garage for Veterans Service vehicles and storage. County Commissioner Timothy Bechtol said it is too early to have a cost estimate, but he believes the improvements will cost less than $1 million.

"We're super excited," Coleman said. "Commissioner Bechtol (who is an architect) is going to help us with that first, very rough, sketch."

Northeast District

Chinn Allotment sanitary sewer project moving forward with additional relief for residents
The Portager, August 5, 2024
Residents in Ravenna Township's Chinn Allotment may see some financial relief from a multi-million sanitary sewer project that is coming their way.

Portage County commissioners recently approved $500,000 in ARPA funds for the project and put the project out for bid.

The new sewer system is planned for part of Red Brush Road/Brady Lake Road, Genevieve Road, Plainview Road, Lois Road, Marchinn Road, Woodlawn Avenue, Roselawn Avenue, Rose Street, Wall Street, Mabel Avenue and San Mar Street.

A new pump station will be built on Brady Lake Road to collect and transfer sewage to the Short Street station, which will be upgraded to handle the increased flow. From there, the sewage will be transferred to an existing wastewater treatment facility.

Besides the ARPA funds, helping to fund the estimated $11 million project will be $500,000 from the Ohio Public Works Commission, $925,000 from the Army Corps of Engineers, $1 million from the Ohio EPA H2Ohio Fund, a $4 million principal forgiveness loan from the Ohio EPA Water Pollution Control Loan Fund and $431,250 that the county had left over from a separate water resources project.

Central District

Old county home site memorialized
Morrow County Sentinel, August 7, 2024
Members of Headwaters Outdoor Education Center gathered with other groups on July 28 at Headwaters to dedicate a memorial to honor residents of the Morrow County home who were buried at the "Morrow County Home Cemetery" from 1900-1940.

The cemetery is located on CR 76, also known as Home Road. The wrought iron fence and the decorative iron arch are all that is left from the Morrow County Home and are now the boundary marker for the cemetery, which is on Headwaters property.

Over the past 25 years, Headwaters committee members have connected with Morrow County Historical Society and Genealogical Society members to trace the records of County Home residents who are buried in the cemetery. The ceremony on Sunday was a culmination of their efforts.

Eddie Lou Meimer, president of Headwaters Center, welcomed visitors to Headwaters Outdoor Education Center. She introduced former County Commissioner Olen Jackson, who was commissioner when he and Commissioners Don Staley and Don Weaver were in office at the time Headwaters was first envisioned in 1997-98.

Southwest District

Clark County pulls funding after homeless shelter closes, calls issue sickening
Springfield News Sun, August 7, 2024
Clark County ended its contract with Dayton-based homelessness nonprofit Homefull on Wednesday after Homefull shut the doors of the Executive Inn emergency shelter Tuesday — one day after Springfield City Commission voted not to re-up their contract for Homefull to manage the facility.

The contract, which had recently been renewed for $750,000, was contingent on Homefull operating the Executive Inn, Clark County Department of Job and Family Services director Ginny Martycz said during a regular County Commission meeting Wednesday. Because the city no longer contracts with Homefull to operate the Executive Inn, the county cannot fund the nonprofit, she said.

"We had no problems with the provision of services; it was simply the shelter is not there [and] we cannot fund that shelter and I can't fund any other shelters in Clark County now due to pending litigation," Martycz said.

The county and Sheltered Inc. are in pending litigation over money the county says the nonprofit owes following the termination of a portion of a $700,000 contract over alleged "mismanagement" of funds.

Sheltered Inc. disputed the allegations, and the county entered into an agreement with the Ohio Attorney General in November 2023 to collect money it said is owed by Sheltered Inc., requiring the nonprofit to pay back more than $500,000.

On Wednesday, Clark County Commission President Melanie Flax Wilt called Springfield city commissioners' vote to reject the Homefull contract "shortsighted."

"They turned down a management contract with the only provider who responded to the RFP for services and snubbed $1 million in federal HUD funding that was supporting it," Flax Wilt said. "There's no telling whether those funds will continue to be available locally."

Southeast District

Rulli to transform approach to Congressional role, attends Belmont Commissioner's meeting
WTOV9, August 7, 2024
Congressman Michael Rulli spoke at the Belmont County Commissioner's meeting on Wednesday morning.

Now a few months into his newly elected seat, Rulli says he's realized that commissioners are the backbone of each county

He also mentioned areas in which the Buckeye State could improve, saying local and state governments should push for synergy within their administrations.

"So, the purpose is, we're going to treat this office a little bit differently than a traditional Congressional office," Rulli said. "We're really going to get grassroots with it, so that's where the rubber meets the road, and that's always in your county commissioner's seats.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Please view the CCAO Calendar for a comprehensive list of events to note.

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AUGUST 16
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 21
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 21 - 23
CCAO Summer Symposium - Hocking Hills

AUGUST 23
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 29
CCAO Webinar: Public Works Commission Update

BY SEPTEMBER 28
County elected officials and employees must take Fraud Reporting training

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