



Franklin Soil & Water  
Conservation District

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **COMMISSIONERS APPROVE RIPARIAN SETBACKS IN THE BIG DARBY WATERSHED**

Following guidelines established by the Big Darby Accord, Franklin County Commissioners unanimously approved an amendment to the county's zoning regulations which establishes stream buffer zones around waterways in the Big Darby Creek watershed to ensure that the areas remain undisturbed and in their natural state.

The Big Darby Creek is an important natural resource in central Ohio due to the variety of animals and plants that live in and along the Big Darby and surrounding tributaries. Retaining the unique nature of the Big and Little Darby Creeks as a valuable community asset is a goal of this new regulation.

Commissioners noted that the stream setback will protect area homes from rising flood waters, preserve fish and the aquatic habitat and build 'green infrastructure' which will allow birds and wildlife to migrate.

"Franklin County is committed to protecting our environment so that future generations can enjoy our lakes, streams, and all of our precious natural resources," said Commission President Marilyn Brown. "I am glad that we have worked diligently with our regional partners to make it happen."

Stream bank erosion poses a serious threat to property, the health and safety of communities and the quality of our water resources. A vegetated stream setback helps to protect against stream bank erosion by slowing runoff and stabilizing stream banks. The Ohio EPA found that vegetated stream banks are up to 20,000 times more resistant to erosion than bare stream banks. Stream setbacks can easily provide the "buffering" action that is needed to prevent stream bank erosion.

"The county is working with the city and our other partners to implement the principles of the Darby Accord," said Commissioner Mary Jo Kilroy. "The setbacks are an integral part of protecting this scenic river and watershed."

"Putting this to work was a major leadership goal for me in 2006, and I am very proud of the way our community has come together to protect the Big Darby for ALL of our future generations of Franklin County families," said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "Adopting reasonable standards that will protect the creatures of the streams is consistent with our strong policy on promoting sustainability that works in conjunction with economic development. We will all benefit from clean water, just as we will all benefit from preserving this one-of-a-kind national treasure."

Both economic and environmental improvements are benefits of implementing the Big Darby Creek Stream setbacks. Economic improvements include preserving land characteristics, maintaining or increasing property values because of aesthetic enhancements, assisting in keeping community maintenance costs low and reducing infrastructure costs. Environmental improvements include protecting the health and safety of the residents by restoring and maintaining the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the water resources and their channels and reduction of flooding, erosion and pollution to local waterways.

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District in coordination with the Franklin County Economic Development and Planning Department developed the regulation based on a model riparian setback regulation in the Chagrin Watershed.