



## THE PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY OF HOCKING SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The public records policy of the Hocking Soil and Water Conservation District (HSWCD) guides employees in making available the materials to which the public is entitled by law. The policy, summarized below, appears in full in the HSWCD's Policies and Procedures Manual. Also, a copy of the most recent edition of the Ohio Sunshine Laws: An Open Government Resource Manual, which explains open records laws, is available free at [www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/YellowBook](http://www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/YellowBook).

**Defining and Organizing Public Records:** Records that document the work of the HSWCD are public, unless they are exempt by law from disclosure. Public records laws apply to records in any format, including those that exist on paper, electronically (for example, email), or on any other media.

**Response Timeframe:** Public records are available for inspection during regular business hours. Public records must be made available for inspection promptly. Copies of records must be made available within a reasonable period of time. It is the goal of the HSWCD that requests for public records be acknowledged in writing, or if feasible, satisfied within three business days of the request.

**Handling Requests:** No specific language is required to make a request for public records. However, the requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the office to identify, retrieve, and review the records. The requestor does not have to put the request in writing, and does not have to provide his or her identity, or the intended use of the requested public record. It is this office's general policy that this information is not to be requested. However, the law does permit the office to ask for a written request, the requester's identity, and/or the intended use of the information requested, but only if (1) a written request or disclosure of identity or intended use would benefit the requester by enhancing the office's ability to identify, locate, or deliver the public records that have been requested; and (2) the requester is first told that a written request is not required and that the requester may decline to reveal the requester's identity or intended use.

When requests are made to the District for inspection and copying of records either entirely held or created by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), jointly held by the District and NRCS, or were jointly created by the above parties, the policy contained in the NRCS General Manual defines NRCS policy under the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act. All requests should be in writing and addressed to the NRCS State Conservationist or the State FOIA/PA officer. If the District Conservationist deems the Freedom of Information Act applies, the individual's request will be forwarded to the NRCS State Conservationist or the State FOIA/PA Officer. Only the NRCS State Conservationist or the State FOIA/PA officer, following the receipt of the written request, can approve release of records requested and covered under the Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act.

**Electronic Records:** Electronic records are to be treated in the same manner as records in other formats. Public record content transmitted to or from private accounts or personal devices are subject to disclosure. All employees, supervisors or representatives of the HSWCD are required to retain them in accordance with applicable records retention schedules.

**Denials or Redactions:** If the requester makes an ambiguous or overly broad request or has difficulty in making a request such that the office cannot reasonably identify what public records are being requested, the request may be denied, but the office must then provide the requester an opportunity to revise the request by informing the requester of the manner in which records are maintained and accessed by the office. If the office withholds, redacts, or otherwise denies requested records, it must provide an explanation, including legal authority, for the denial(s).

**Copying and Mailing Costs:** There is no charge to inspect public records. Those seeking public records may be charged only the actual cost of making copies, not labor. The charge for paper copies is two cents per page. The charge for electronic files downloaded to a compact disc or flash drive will be the actual cost of the disc or flash drive. A requester may be required to pay in advance for the actual costs involved in providing the copy. The requester may choose whether to have the record duplicated upon paper, upon the same medium on which the public record is kept, or upon any other medium on which the office determines that the record can reasonably be duplicated as an integral part of the office's normal operations. If a requester asks that documents be delivered to them, he or she may be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies, or other actual costs of delivery. There is no charge for e-mailed documents.

**Managing Records:** Hocking Soil and Water Conservation District's records are subject to records retention schedules. The office's current schedules are available at 148 North Homer Avenue, Logan, Ohio, a location readily available to the public as required by Ohio Revised Code §149.43(B)(2).

## Hocking Soil & Water Conservation District Public Records Request Form

Date of request: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Address (required for mail): \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (optional): \_\_\_\_\_ Email (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Description for Records: