

Sandusky Basin Symposium
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**Land Use and Cover Changes within the Sandusky River Watershed –
Implications for Erosion and Runoff Control Strategies**

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The review of land use data for the 4 counties comprising most of the Sandusky River Watershed (Crawford, Sandusky, Seneca and Wyandot) shows that while trends in population, farmland and cropland are downward, urban areas, as measured by increases in rural population and residential development are trending upward. Review of land cover data for the same counties shows that cropland remains the dominant land use, varying from 68 percent in Sandusky County to 80 percent in Seneca County. Since the 1920's, dominant agricultural cropland cover has changed from corn, small grains and hay to largely soybeans with corn and some wheat currently. The use of conservation tillage has grown since 1990, with no-till and mulch till soybeans plus no-till wheat being predominant practices. Whole field Conservation Reserve Program acres grew during this same time but have recently remained level or decreased.

The use of cropland cover data to calculate Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation cover factors since 1918 suggests that the adoption of conservation tillage in the 1990's significantly reduced the potential for cropland erosion. Storm runoff calculations using the Natural Resources Conservation Service Engineering Field Handbook – Chapter 2 suggest that changes in either crop rotations, conservation tillage or extent of urbanization can all influence the rates of watershed runoff.