

Rural Conservation News

Volume 1
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Lafayette, Indiana

SWCD Annual Meeting and Conservation Workshop



CELEBRATE CONSERVATION! - Attend the SWCD annual meeting and conservation workshop to learn about a variety of conservation related topics including the USDA Conservation Security Program.

The Tippecanoe County Soil and Water Conservation District annual meeting and luncheon will be held on Tuesday, March 8 in combination with a daylong workshop at the JS Wright Forestry Center in rural West Lafayette. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. with coffee and donuts – the workshop will conclude at 2:00 p.m.

Workshop speakers will provide information on a variety of topics related to agriculture, backyard conservation, and urban development. The SWCD Long Range Plan will be announced.

A business meeting and supervisor election will be conducted after lunch followed by a program titled "Birds of Prey and People." Mark Booth of Take Flight Education will delight you as he explains why raptors (hawks, owls, falcons, and their kin) have long held our imagination. See what it's like to be "hawk eyed" or "falcon fast" by meeting these magnificent predators up close and sharing the stories of our shared history.

Breakout sessions include something for everyone. Participants will choose to attend two of the six sessions offered. Agriculture related sessions include:

1) Conservation Security Program – Mark Eastman, USDA NRCS District Conservationist, will provide information to help you prepare for the Conservation Security Program (CSP). CSP is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private ag lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. CSP rewards the best and motivates the rest! This program may mean added income for those who already have adopted and are using a wide variety of conservation practices. USDA FSA representatives will also provide information on the USDA Conservation Reserve Program.

2) Native Grassland Restoration – Jeff Keifer, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will provide information about establishing native grasses for wildlife

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News from  UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Conservation Security Program

INDIANAPOLIS, February 9, 2005—

Now is the time for farmers to determine their eligibility for the newest of the Farm Bill conservation programs, according to Jane Hardisty, State Conservationist for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Farmers with a majority of their land in one of the four Indiana watersheds selected for funding for 2005 can sign up for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) later this spring.

"This year there is just over \$200 million available nationally to reward farmers who are good stewards. Any rewards they receive for their conservation and good management efforts are well deserved. These farmers are making a difference," said Hardisty. "We like to say that the 'Price of Admission' for CSP is conservation systems already in place that fully address soil and water quality."

"We are now holding information meetings for farmers in this year's four CSP watersheds. We sent an invitation to every farmer that we know of within the watersheds," said Hardisty. "These meetings will show farmers how to tell if they are eligible. Then in the next few weeks we expect Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns to make the sign-up announcement."

Congress has greatly expanded the funding level for 2005, which is the program's second year. The funding this year allows NRCS to offer the program on nearly 208,000 farms and ranches in the 202 watersheds selected for 2005. There are 23 Indiana counties, five Illinois counties and two Ohio counties in the

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Buffers Protect the Environment



Streamside buffers help filter runoff and provide wildlife habitat.

Agricultural producers wanting to prevent soil erosion, protect air and water quality, and improve habitat for fish and wildlife should investigate what conservation buffer practices might be incorporated into their operations through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Research has shown buffers to be very effective in achieving many conservation objectives and the continuous CRP sign-up offers some extremely attractive financial incentives for use of buffers.

In scientific studies at different locations around the country researchers have shown that filter strips and riparian buffers along streams and around lakes will remove up to 90 percent or more of the sediment in storm water runoff. These same buffer practices also can remove well over half the nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers in runoff and large portions of certain pesticides and pathogens from livestock manure.

Buffers also can be used to control flooding and provide a measure of safety for producers operating farm equipment adjacent to stream banks. With the recent flooding events in Indiana, now may be a good time for producers to explore the environmental and economic benefits of buffers.

In general, wider buffers provide better habitat and, often times, more

pollution control. Use of native grasses, trees, and shrubs in buffers also is preferable, particularly when better wildlife habitat is the goal.

USDA's continuous CRP sign-up offers attractive financial incentives to producers who qualify and are willing to install buffers. Enrollment of land as buffers earns the going CRP rental rate in a particular locale, along with a 20 percent rental rate incentive for key buffer practices including filter strips and riparian buffers. The CRP also pays up to 50 percent cost sharing for buffer practice installation plus additional incentives that add to the attractiveness of using buffers.

Other programs offered through state and federal government agencies and non-profit organizations may be available for landowners who do not qualify for the CRP program.

For more information about use of conservation buffer practices, contact Linda Eastman.

PLACE YOUR AD HERE

You can help support the SWCD by placing an ad in our quarterly newsletter. Contact Linda Eastman for more information. Next newsletter coming in April.

Bobwhite Quail Habitat Initiative

(from USDA FSA News)

In many parts of the nation, the Bobwhite Quail population has dropped due primarily to loss of habitat. A new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practice (CP33) will be used to provide food and cover for quail, upland birds, and other species.

Northern Bobwhite Quail are a native quail species with an historical range in 35 states. The birds are a valued inhabitant of farm landscapes, an important aspect of rural culture, and are a key to the heritage of hunting. However, the bobwhite quail population has declined from an estimated 59 million birds in 1980 to about 20 million in 1999. Their habitats are disappearing due to urbanization, increased grassland cultivation, and a transitioning of once grassy fields into woods and forests.

FSA estimates that the nesting and brood-rearing cover created by the initiative will increase bobwhite quail numbers by 750,000 annually. Planted buffers will also benefit reptiles, aquatic species, and upland birds, many of which are being considered for listing as endangered species. In addition, the initiative will reduce soil erosion and protect water quality by trapping field sediments and nutrients.

This practice is offered as a CRP continuous sign-up. The land must be suitably located and adaptable to the establishment of Bobwhite Quail. In addition, the land will be required to meet the eligible cropland requirements, meaning the land must have been cropped in 4 out of the 6 years, 1996 through 2001.

The eligible land will be cropland around field edges suitable for quail. The maximum width is 120 feet .

Producers are paid an annual rental payment along with the cost share for the acres involved.

Tippecanoe County is limited to a total enrollment of 200 acres on a first come first serve basis. **Hurry in to the Farm Service Agency in the USDA Service Center if you are interested.**

What's the Value of Improving Soil Quality

by Barry Fisher, NRCS Conservation Tillage Specialist

The 2004 growing season will likely make the record books for producing some of the all time highest yields for corn and soybeans in much of Indiana and the Midwest. As the first combines rolled into the fields last fall, quiet whispers of 70 bushel beans and 200 bushel corn were being heard at the coffee shops around the county. By mid-harvest it had become evident to many growers that this would be the year to beat all others for production. Yields were so good that many farmers became careful not to be too quick to announce their success for fear that they just weren't believable. Besides, you never want to be the first one to speak in such a setting because you just know you'll be "one-upped" by the next.

Some of the most unbelievable "bin buster" yields were coming from farmers who have been steadily and sometimes quietly, improving their soil quality through the mastery of longterm, continuous no-till. Many of these high yields were coming from what would traditionally have been considered average soil at best. So how does continuous no-till improve soil quality? Soil scientists at the USDA Soil Quality Institute have developed a process for measuring soil quality. These tests have shown that most long term no-till plots have: improved soil structure,

improved soil drainage, increased organic matter, improved soil tilth, reduced erosion, improved soil moisture, increased earthworm populations and reduced weed pressure. All this leads to a higher inherent yield potential. This holds true, not only in good years like '04, but even more so in the tough years. Higher soil quality is better than crop insurance because it pays every year.

Additional values which can be added to a no-till cropping system have been demonstrated through many studies. Most economic analyses have shown input costs to be \$12- \$34/ac. less for no-till systems. A USDA study has shown a savings of 30 minutes per acre per year to prepare and plant a crop for no-till. For a 1000 acre farm, that's 50 extra work days per year to devote to marketing, management, additional acres, or better yet family. All this and improved soil quality. That's value added agriculture. In a global market we must all strive for greater efficiency.

For farmers to capitalize on these benefits, the first step is to "Expect Success". The technology advancements that have taken place over the past decade have brought these soil quality building possibilities to nearly every field in Indiana.

Supervisor Election

This year 3 individuals are running for 2 seats on the SWCD Board of Supervisors. Supervisor election will be held during the business meeting at the conservation workshop on March 8. Nominees include:

David Kovich - David is the owner of Komark Business and Komark, Ltd. He maintains conservation areas on his farmland along Wildcat creek and utilizes erosion control practices on development sites. David currently serves as an associate supervisor.

Steve Roy - Steve is the vice president of Fairfield Contractors. He owns a hay and livestock farm. Conservation practices include intensive grazing, terraces and erosion control structures. Steve has served 3 years as supervisor.

Chuck Shelby - Chuck owns and operates a livestock and grain farm. Conservation practices include the use of no-till, reduced tillage and has several grassed waterways and erosion control structures. Chuck was a past supervisor serving the SWCD for over 12 years.

Farm the Best...

Buffer the Rest...

SWCD staff is utilizing GIS (Geographical Information System) technology to identify croplands that are within 150 feet of the Wabash River and other smaller streams and ditches in Tippecanoe County.

These areas may be well suited to serve as a buffer to protect water quality and to provide wildlife habitat. The land may be eligible for the Continuous Reserve Program (CRP) or other state and federal programs, and landowners could get paid to put it into grass or trees for 10 years or more.

After the areas are identified, landowners will receive additional information by mail.

-Linda Eastman

Rural Conservation Committee News

Thank You...

A huge "Thank You" to the individuals who volunteer their time and effort to serve on an SWCD committee.

Rural Conservation Committee

Jim King, Chair

Linda Eastman, Staff Rep

Mark Eastman

Sue Gerlach

Roger McClellan

Chuck Shelby

Evaro Krause

Jerry Risk

Jennifer Simons

Lorraine Rund

Joe Rund

Tom Applegate

Jack Lahrman

Dean Zimmerman

Urban Conservation Committee

Dave Kovich, Chair

Sue Gerlach, Staff Rep

Tom Osborn

Krista Trout

Tom Ziegler

Pat Jarboe

Opal Kuhl

Steve Murray

Steve Roy

Sarah Baxter

Education Committee

Lorraine Rund, Chair

Don Emmert, Staff Rep

Dawn Boston

Roberta Crabtree

Mary Cutler

Sherry Fulk-Bringman

Brent Ladd

Karen Miller

Jack Rhoda

Dan Shepherdson

Marketing

KD Benson, Chair

Linda Eastman, Staff Rep

Ernie Wilkinson

Dan Dunten

Karen Scanlon

Jennifer McGarvey

Jennifer Boss

Bob McCormick

Finance Committee

Steve Roy, Chair

Chris Remley, Staff Rep

David Byers

Susan Ulrich

Bernie Dahl

Steve Qualkinbush

Scott Rumble

Bob Eddleman

Phil Sterner

Jan Myers

Personnel Committee

Roger Verhey, Chair

Chris Remley, Staff Rep

Frank Cederquist

Miriam Osborn

Bryan Metzger

Steve Qualkinbush

Scott Rumble

Dan Dunten

Urban Conservation Priority Identified



Sandbags around a storm drain helps keep sediment from entering the drain.

The National Water Quality Inventory: USEPA 1998 Report to Congress identified urban stormwater runoff as one of the leading sources of water quality impairment in surface waters. Of the 11 pollution source categories listed in the report, urban runoff/storm sewers was ranked as the sixth leading source of impairment in

rivers. Careful stewardship of the non-agricultural producing land is essential to the protection and health of the water resources of Tippecanoe County. To address this concern, sixteen members of our community agreed to help the SWCD develop a long range plan focusing on the conservation needs of the non-

agricultural areas of our county. A “proactive approach to urban conservation issues” was chosen as the mission of the Urban Conservation Committee. Four goals were recommended by the urban committee, but the top priority selected by the SWCD Board of Supervisors was for the creation of a full time urban technical assistance program.

This priority was selected due to the district’s need to address the recent changes in implementation of the second phase of the Clean Water Act which imposes strict requirements on urban communities for erosion control and stormwater quality compliance. Moreover, the Area Plan Commission would like additional technical assistance and local landowners have requested assistance for streambank stabilization issues. These all call for a proactive commitment from the SWCD and a full time technician.

If you are interested in current issues or in serving on this committee, please contact Sue Gerlach, IDNR Resource Specialist.

-Sue Gerlach

Urban Conservation Committee News

Burnett Creek Students “Discover Water”

The District assisted with Burnett Creek Elementary School’s Science Day on January 28 in Tippecanoe County. The theme for the day was “Discover Water” as every class rotated to stations that dealt with different water issues.

The District brought six grade-specific educational programs into the gymnasium as educators from three SWCDs taught the children. Topics that were covered included the three phases of water, the water cycle, erosion and run off pollution, surface tension, and water quality.

The children were extremely inquisitive and had many questions throughout the program. Not only was the science of water incorporated into the day, but also arts, literature, and music. The day concluded with a musical ensemble where each



Burnett Creek students compete in the H₂Olympics by seeing who can add the most number of drops of water to a penny before the water runs off. This activity demonstrates the adhesion and cohesion properties of water.

child played their rain stick they made and decorated. Karen Miller, Science Day’s founder, did a wonderful job

bringing together the SWCD and Purdue University’s Outreach Program to make the day a fun filled success.

-Don Emmert

Education Committee News

A Message From the Chair...
**SWCD Develops Priorities
 for 2005-2010**

The next five years will prove to be a very exciting and productive time for the Tippecanoe County Soil and Water District! In 2004, District Leadership and Staff spent a significant amount of time in determining key environmental issues for our county as well as developing a Strategic Plan to address these issues. The ultimate goal is to protect, preserve, and improve the quality of natural resources we have available to us.

During 2005, the key areas of focus for the SWCD will be:

1. *Increase the amount of riparian buffer strips along rivers and streams*
2. *Increase the use of conservation tillage on highly erosive soils*
3. *Provide a full-time staff member to provide technical assistance to urban developments*

4. *Increase the quantity and quality of environmental education for all age groups*

5. *Increase the quality and quantity of wildlife habitat*

In order to efficiently address these areas of focus, 6 committees have been established. Each committee consists of SWCD Staff Members, District Supervisors, and concerned citizens, providing a diverse planning base. The committees are: **Rural Conservation, Urban Conservation, Education, Marketing, Finance, and Marketing**

We look forward to the opportunities that 2005 will provide and invite you to join one of the committees that interest you.

-Jim King, SWCD Chair

**District Hires Water
 Quality Educator**

The Tippecanoe SWCD would like to welcome aboard their new Water Quality Educator, Don Emmert. Don has replaced Angie Tilton as she has moved to IDNR. Don comes to us from Columbus, Ohio with experience as a Watershed Coordinator at the Franklin SWCD. He will be working with educators within the schools in Tippecanoe County on such topics as nonpoint source pollution, water quality monitoring, and educational programs. Don looks forward to working with Tippecanoe County's many technical and educational resources outside of the schools to promote education in the field of soil and water. Welcome Don!

**Farm Service Agency
 Reminders...**

*Producers are reminded that the final date to enroll or re-enroll in the 2005 DCP Farm Program is June 1st. There will be a \$100 service fee charged if all signatures are not received by that date!

*Producers are also reminded to make an appointment and "certify" their planted acres as soon as planting is complete. For 2005, FSA is required to enter the planting dates for each field so you will need to be prepared to supply those dates

-Sandy Weaver
 County Executive Director

SWCD Meeting...

Continued from Page 1

habitat. Dean Zimmerman, IDNR Division of Wildlife, will share information about state wildlife programs.

In addition, the following sessions offer backyard habitat and urban related topics: A Window to Nature: How to Attract Birds and Butterflies to your Backyard, Celebrating Indiana's Wildflowers, Planning with POWER (Protecting Our Water and Environmental Resources), and Implementing Urban Conservation Practices at the local level.

The cost of the workshop/lunch is \$5.00 per person and reservations must be received by March 4th.

For more information or to receive a program brochure, contact the SWCD office by calling 765-474-9992, ext. 3 or visit our website at

www.tippecanoeswcd.org

CSP...

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four Indiana watersheds selected for funding.

Two of the four watersheds (Tippecanoe River, and the Middle Wabash-Deer Creek watersheds) include acreage in the northeastern part of Tippecanoe County near the towns of Buck Creek and Americus.

Producers can also see a detailed county map at the local NRCS office, or on-line at www.in.nrcs.usda.gov. Just click on the CSP feature, then select County Watershed Maps under 2005 Watersheds and look for your county.

**Receive this
 Newsletter by Email...**

You can help the SWCD save time and money by signing up for e-news! Send your email address to:

linda.eastman@IN.nacdnet.net

Calendar of Events

March

- 4 SWCD Board Meeting
- 8 SWCD Annual Meeting
- 18-20 Greater Lafayette Home and Garden Show
- 22-23 Ag Day

April

- 1 SWCD Board Meeting
- 16-17 Purdue Spring Fest
- 29 Arbor Day

Board meetings are held the 1st Friday of each month, 8:30 a.m., at the SWCD office. The public is welcome to attend.

SWCD OFFICE HOURS

8:00 - 4:30 M-F



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Tippecanoe County SWCD Board of Supervisors

Jim King, Chair
Roger McClellan
Steve Roy
Chuck Shelby
Roger Verhey

SWCD Office Staff

Chris Remley (ext. 101)
Office Administrator
Linda Eastman (ext. 110)
Environmental Coordinator
Don Emmert (ext. 111)
Water Quality Educator
Jennifer Boss (ext. 119)
Brock Welge (ext. 113)
Part-time staff
Kriston Powell (ext. 113)
Danielle Quigle (ext. 113)
Work-study students

NRCS Office Staff

Mark Eastman
District Conservationist

IDNR Staff

Sue Gerlach (ext. 115)
Resource Specialist

SWCD Committee Chairs

Rural Conservation - Jim King
Urban Conservation - Dave Kovich
Education - Lorraine Rund
Personnel - Roger Verhey
Finance - Steve Roy
Marketing - KD Benson

To Better Serve You...

After reading the enclosed article from our chairperson, I'm sure you can see that the SWCD staff and conservation partnership employees have more than enough to do, and like all of you...not enough time to do it. In an effort to better serve you, we would like to provide you with information on how we are addressing a specific office concern, and ask for your cooperation.

Issue: The SWCD does not have an "official" receptionist on staff that greets the customer at the front desk and answers incoming phone calls. As a result, phone calls are answered by whichever staff member is available. Often the call is not specifically for the person answering, and requires that a message be taken and given to the correct individual. This can be time-consuming, and in an attempt to make the best use of our full-time staff, we are implementing a new system to address the issue of incoming phone calls.

Solution: All calls for NRCS staff should continue to be placed to the general extension (3). All others calls should be placed to specific staff members' direct extension numbers. If the individual is in their office, they will answer the call, eliminating the need for a message to be taken. If not, these calls, in addition to others placed to the general extension, will be forwarded to the answering machine for retrieval by part-time employees. The part-time employees are available in the afternoon to answer incoming calls to the general extension and will relay the answering machine messages to the appropriate staff members at that time.

We appreciate your patience as we attempt to address our staffing issues, and encourage you to contact our staff members directly. (Extension numbers are listed next to staff person's name.)

-Chris Remley
Office Administrator