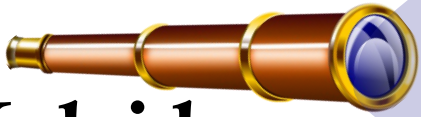


Conservation Kaleidoscope



Today's Visions for
Tomorrow's Future

Volume 26, Issue 2

March/April 2024

The St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District 64th Annual Meeting

On Friday, February 16th, the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District celebrated 64 years of conservation at its Annual Meeting. The meeting was held at Hedwig Memorial Center, and began with a call to order, introduction of guests, and the election. This year, local farmer Ryan Lee was voted on to the board as our newest supervisor. As is tradition, we followed the election with a delicious family-style Polish Dinner.



Newly-Elected
Supervisor Ryan Lee



Green Bridger Growers Chris
Tidmarsh and Jan Pilarski with Sarah

After dinner, Chairman Chris Matthys presented this year's Conservation Awards. Urban Conservation Farmer of the Year went to Green Bridge Growers, a local small farm the strives to use practices that improve soil health and protect water quality. We are thankful co-founders Jan

Pilarski and Chris Tidmarsh were able to attend the meeting and accept the award. We also honored the work of John Richardson with the Friend of Wildlife Award, and Watts Family Farm with River Friendly Farmer. They were unable to attend.

We closed the evening with our keynote speaker, Eric Shideler, the executive director for the Vermillion SWCD. Thank you, Eric, for reminding us of the need for county soil and water conservation districts, and how much stronger a district is because of its volunteers.



Keynote Speaker
Eric Shideler

Many thanks to everyone who came to celebrate with us!



Supervisors Marty Lappin, Chris
Matthys, Joe Gregory, and Ryan Lee



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Upcoming Events!

March

- 9th** - Growing Summit
- 19th** - Board Meeting
- 26th** - St. Joseph-Marshall Counties Invasive Plant Partnership Strike Team Call Out, Marshall County
- 28th** - St. Joseph County Regenerative Agriculture Partnership Quarterly Meeting
- 29th** - County Holiday - no SWCD Staff

April

- 2nd** - St. Joseph-Marshall Counties Invasive Plant Partnership Strike Team Call Out - St. Joseph County
- 5th-7th** - Ag Days
- 16th** - Board Meeting

Keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for details and more events!



What's Going on Under the Covers?



Our signs are popping up with the cover crops! As we are driving down the road, we get excited to see a field of green at this time of year! Most likely it's cover crops!

Why is this exciting? Because cover crops are an important tool for **keeping soil healthy**.

In conventional agriculture, fields are left with no cover between cash crops. This can lead to more erosion, poor drainage, and poor plant growth.

Soil is not meant to be naked - it is healthier when it is kept covered. Cover crops are beneficial plants that are typically unharvested and are grown between production crops. Growing plants in between provides much needed living roots all year around, increasing organic matter in the soil, and creating more air space. They help reduce soil erosion and agricultural runoff, allowing more water to be available to the plants, as well as protecting nearby waterways from excess sediment and nutrients. Additionally, healthy soil is alive. Cover crops feed many types of soil microbes that are beneficial to crops.

These are just a few of the benefits of growing cover crops! Through this year, we will be hosting events to give you the opportunity to see the benefits for yourself, and hear from the experts. We also offer farm visits to provide technical assistance in bringing cover crops and other conservation practices to your farm.

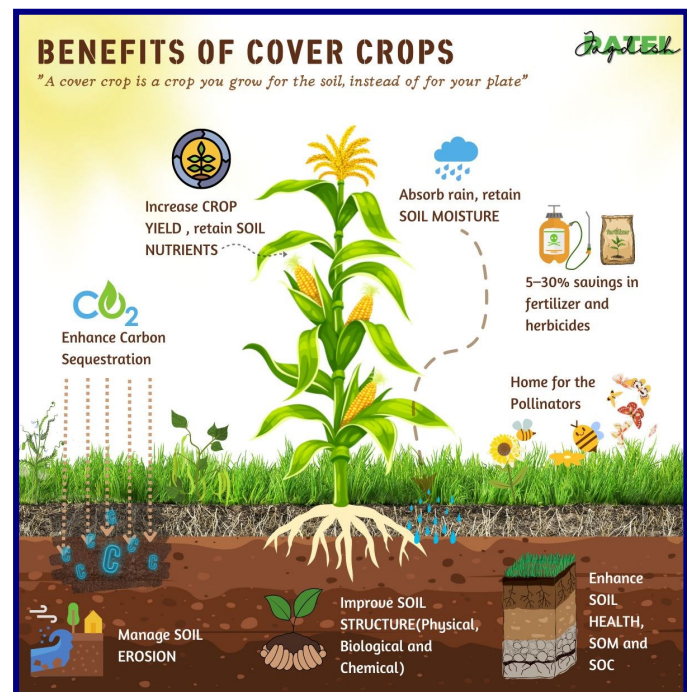


Photo Credit: Jagdish Patel

Be a Part of Our Strike Team!



Are you interested in invasive species? Have you attended one of the SMIPP Weed Wrangles®? Are you willing to get down and dirty and make more of an impact on invasive plant removal?

Come to one of our Call Out meetings!

Where Weed Wrangles® involve some removal of invasive plants and more public education, Strike Teams focus on intense, targeted removal. Experienced volunteers and trained individuals focus their efforts in a particular area, using specific methods of control to manage the invasives.

Learn more about the teams and how to join at one of our upcoming call out meetings! Also follow our Facebook page for more information and upcoming SMIPP events!



Marshall County: March 26th - Conservation Clubhouse, Plymouth - 6:30-7:30 pm
St. Joseph County: April 2 - Centre Township Library, South Bend - 6:30-7:30 pm

Urban Agriculture & Innovative Production

The Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP) has announced its FY24 Competitive Grants Program. This funding opportunity is open to all nonprofits, local governments, Native American Tribal governments and organizations, and schools and supports a wide range of activities through Planning Projects and Implementation Projects.

Planning Projects initiate or expand efforts of farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools, and other stakeholders in urban areas and suburbs, particularly where access to fresh foods are limited or unavailable. Projects may accomplish one or any number of needs such as food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, and development of policies related to zoning and other needs of urban and urban agroforestry production.

Implementation Projects accelerate existing and emerging models of urban, indoor, and other agricultural practices that serve multiple farmers. Projects will improve local food access and collaborate with partner organizations and may support infrastructure needs, emerging technologies, educational endeavors, and urban farming policy implementation.

Project funding can range from \$75,000 to \$350,000 for a project. Priority will be given to organizations with proven capacity to carry out meaningful community-focused work in urban agriculture or innovative production. Applications for this award will close April 9th.

For more information, on the UAIP grants, including a webinar and FAQs, please visit www.usda.gov/topics/urban/grants.



St. Joseph County
Soil & Water
Conservation District

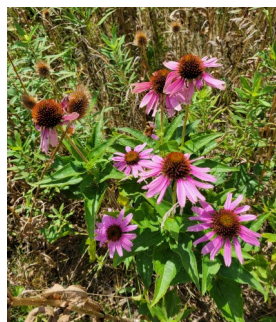
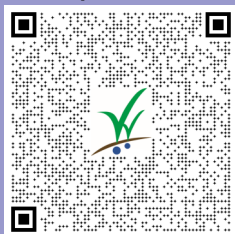
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Order by March 28th!



www.stjosephswcd.org/native-plant-kits

Visit our website & watch Facebook for info on events and more!

St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation Partnership

St. Joseph County SWCD Partnership Staff

Sarah Longenecker, SWCD
Misty Sorchevich, SWCD
Debbie Knepp, NRCS
Jorge Lozoya, NRCS

SWCD Honorary Members:

Keith Lineback
William Millar

SWCD Supervisors:

Chris Matthys, Chairman
Marty Lappin, Vice Chairman
Dave Vandewalle
Joe Gregory
Ryan Lee

Farm Service Agency Staff

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