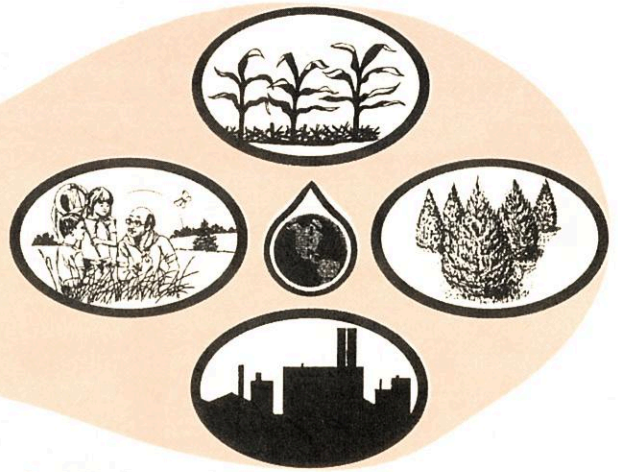
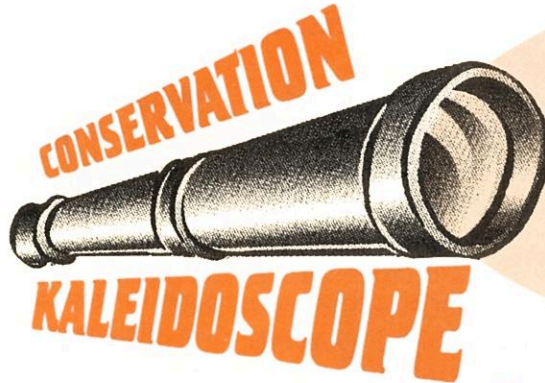




St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

Oct/Nov/Dec 2006
Volume 8, Issue 4

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Calendar of Events

October 9

Columbus Day
Office Closed

October 16

SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 AM – Farm Bureau Mtg.
Room

November 10

Veterans Day Holiday
Office Closed

November 20

SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 AM—Farm Bureau Mtg.
Room

November 23 & 24

Thanksgiving Holiday
Office Closed

December 18

SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
6:30 PM – Farm Bureau Mtg.
Room

December 25

Christmas Day
Office Closed



ANNUAL MEETING

The 47th Annual Meeting of the
St. Joseph County
Soil & Water Conservation District
has been set for
Friday, January 26th, 2007
6:30 PM
at
St. Adalbert's Hall

Reservations are due: Thursday, January 18th, 2007



**TREE SALES
ORDER FORMS**

Order Forms for the 2006 - 2007
Tree Sale Program will be mailed
during the first week of October.

If you haven't received an order form
and would like to, please contact the
office.



What's Inside . . .

The Natural Educator	2
Woodland Times	3,4
Field Notes	5,6
Urban Meanderings	7



THE NATURAL EDUCATOR

**** ENVIRONMENTAL **** **** PROGRAMS ****

The SWCD is happy to provide a speaker for your group or organization. Available topics are: reptiles and amphibians of the area, water quality, and conservation programs.



Just call the office and ask for Rick for complete details and to schedule a presentation.

WINTER BIRD FEEDING **A NATIONAL PASTTIME**

What a wonderful way to spend a cold winter day. Staring out the window and watching the antics of the neighborhood's feathered friends.

This is truly something everyone can do, and like so many other things in life, feeding the birds can be very simple or quite complex. It can be inexpensive or quite expensive. And I think this is part of the charm of winter bird feeding. It is what you want it to be.

Some simple rules to follow:

Try to keep your feeders close to cover. We have two hawks that really like to eat other birds. The larger Cooper's Hawk and smaller Sharp-Shinned Hawk. Both will work feeders to catch their lunch and by placing your feeder close to cover you will provide a quick hiding place. Oh, do not get mad at the hawk's, but understand that this is nature and it is a "bird feeder".



Sharp-Shinned Hawk



Cooper's Hawk

The better quality of feed, the fewer sparrows. If you can spend a little more on feed this will help cut down on the sparrows. Inexpensive feeds contain a lot of corn, sorghum and millet. Black oil sunflower seed is



one of the best and most preferred by songbirds but not as much by sparrows. And if you can use multiple feeders and different kinds of food, you will attract a greater variety of birds.



Don't be afraid to limit the amount of feed you put out. Some people feel that they must keep the feeders full at all times and this can get costly. Birds will include your feeder in their normal forage pattern but do not stop foraging just because of a feeder. So if your feeder is empty it is not a big deal. This holds true even if you take a vacation and your feeders go empty. Only under extreme weather conditions and if you feed a lot can this cause a problem.



If you have multiple feeders, keep them about 8 feet apart. This helps with competition and reduces the spread of diseases.

Also clean your feeder occasionally. This will get rid of moldy food and other contaminants that can hurt or kill the bird.

Finally, no matter how you do it, feeding the birds will give you hours of enjoyment and is well worth the money.

A Simple Bird Feeder

Take an empty coffee can or milk jug. Cut out an opening near the bottom on the side. Hang on a tree and add food.



FUN AT THE 4-H FAIR

This year the SWCD and the St. Joseph County Fair Board tried something new at the nature center, a casting contest for kids.

Youth, under the age of 13 came and tried to toss plastic worms on a Styrofoam target located in the middle of the pond.

The contest was held on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon and over 40 kids braved the heat to try their luck. While the target did prove elusive to most, all kids had a great time and everyone won something. The grand prize winner for each age category went home with a complete fishing outfit that was furnished by the Fair Board.

The best memory of the event, a little three year old, by himself, cast the worm completely across the pond and while coming nowhere near the target was so proud of himself that he let out a string of giggles that had everyone nearby laughing.

Make sure you stop by the nature center next year, for what is sure to be an annual event.





WOODLAND TIMES

Forestry News Updates for St. Joseph County

2006 - 2007 Tree Sales Program Set to Begin

As we start the 2006 - 2007 Tree Sales Program, the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District would like to thank everyone for their help and support for last years program. The 20th Annual Tree Sales Program started in October, 2005, and ended April 22, 2006, at the St Joseph County 4-H Fairgrounds. We are proud to announce that we sold 25,400 trees and gave 100 trees away through our tree grant program. The Tree Sales Program



Trees ready for pick up.

has been very successful over the past twenty years due to the outstanding conservation attitude of the community and the hard work of volunteers. Our thanks go out to Randy Matthys and Family, Master Gardeners from St. Joseph County, St. Joseph County Parks, Purdue Cooperative Extension Service, Ryder Truck Rental and Leasing, Department of Natural Resources,



Another satisfied customer!

Natural Resources Conservation Service, St. Joseph County 4-H Fairgrounds, John Manuszak and the Mishawaka High School Waltonian Club, and John Glenn FFA.



Asking questions about the new trees they are buying.

For the 2006 - 2007 Tree Sales Program we are offering some new tree species that include Canadian Hemlock, Chinese Chestnut, Common Winterberry, and Spicebush. For those of you interested in receiving a Tree Flyer for the 2006 - 2007 Tree Sales Program please contact the office at (574) 291-7444 ext. 3, or check out our web site in October.

Trees Provide Valuable Wildlife Habitat

Trees are nature's air conditioners. They shade and cool our homes, bring songbirds close by and mark the changing seasons. Kids love to climb them and sometimes build tree houses among their branches. For all of us, trees are a source of lumber, food, countless products and they beautify our communities and countryside.

Equally important, trees conserve energy, reduce soil erosion, clean the air we breathe and help protect river and stream water quality. If trees are to provide all these benefits, we need to care for the trees we have and plant more for

the future. Indiana's 92 Soil and Water Conservation Districts and their partnership agencies are a source of technical help in deciding what species to plant based on soil and other conditions.

Birds and small animals need concealed places for nesting and hiding, protected from the eyes of predators. Planting conifers or evergreen trees, preferably in a group of three or more trees, can create such places in a farmyard or back yard. Planting hedges with low branches are another great bird habitat. Prickly or thorny plants keep some predators away. Planting shrubs or plants with overhanging branches are another good practice. Bird habitat doesn't stop with trees and shrubs; try building sloping, rock-faced mounds where birds can probe for food in rock crevices or forage on the sheltered slopes.



When planting trees to improve wildlife habitat, consider the importance of planting trees that

will provide the wildlife with a source of food. Good species for summer fruit are cherries, dogwood, plums and apricots. Seeds are a great source of food for birds and small mammals. For this, plant birches, firs, hemlock, maples, spruces and sweet gum. Butternut, black walnut, chestnuts, hazels, hickories, oaks and pecans produce nuts and acorns. Winter fruits from apples, crabapples, dogwood, hackberry and hawthorns provide a valuable food source when other sources are snow covered.





WOODLAND TIMES

Forestry News Updates for St. Joseph County

No matter what their individual food preferences may be, all birds and animals need a dependable source of water close by. This can be supplied by creating a small pond or birdbath in a protected area. Even a dripping tap in the farmyard falling into a shallow pan will work.

Songbirds are natural pest control specialists and are important in the city and country for that reason. You can increase their presence with trees that provide both food and protection from their predators.

Featured Tree Species

Canadian Hemlock

The Canadian Hemlock is an evergreen tree. It has a mature height of 40 to 70 feet and a spread of 25 to 35 feet wide. It grows at a slow to medium growth rate. It grows well in most soils. The tree grows in a pyramidal shape, unless it is pruned to grow otherwise.

The Canadian Hemlock can be used to form field windbreaks or can be trimmed to form a hedge. It can be a nesting place for songbirds and also provide them with food.

If you would like more information on the Canadian Hemlock visit the following website:
www.arboday.org/trees/treeguide/TreeDetail.cfm?ID=142.



Indiana Woodlands Play an Important Part in the Natural Ecosystem



Forest management puts dollars in woodland owner's pockets and protects the quality of Indiana's soil, water, air, plants and animal resources. Indiana's 92 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD's) place a high priority on helping land users understand the value of woodland resources and learn how to improve woodland management. Soil Surveys prepared by cooperating partners of SWCD's, identify soil types and serve as a basis for determining growth potential.

The most basic management practice is forest stand improvement. The purpose of this practice is to improve the stand for maximum growth and profit. This is done by leaving the best trees and getting the right spacing for optimum growth. Additional benefits are soil protection for erosion control and water quality improvement, improving the natural beauty of the site, wildlife habitat improvement and improved recreational values.

Forest stand improvement is most important when the stand of trees is overstocked or where desirable trees are overtopped by defective, deformed or less desirable trees. Shrubs and vines may also be a problem as they sap up moisture needed by the trees or smother out sunlight in the treetops.

Forest stand improvement is best carried out with the guidance of a state or consultant forester. The process involves removal or deadening the hollow, deformed, fire scarred, non-saleable trees, shrubs and vines. Cutting, girdling or use of chemicals is the normal ways of doing this. The cutting or killing of vines should be done where the vines are interfering with the growth of trees that have commercial value. Some vines have high wildlife values and should not be removed from dead, cull trees and ones being chemically killed.



It is important to leave a 50 foot strip of woodland adjacent to open fields, highways or open water areas. This strip will provide wind protection for the rest of the woods, serve as a great food and cover site for wildlife and contribute much to the beauty of the community. Plants such as dogwood, redbud, viburnums, black gum, sugar maple, serviceberry, sassafras, sumac and bittersweet should be encouraged in the woods border area for wildlife and natural beauty.

Indiana's farm woodlands are an important part of the natural ecosystem and can be a source of valuable income for the farm operation. Contact the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District to begin the process of realizing their value.



FIELD NOTES



CONSERVATION TILLAGE

Conservation tillage protects water quality. When farmers leave some of last year's crop residue on the soil surface, the residue acts as mulch, protecting the soil surface from the erosive power of falling raindrops. Raindrops break the small soil particles loose and the runoff carries sediment and attached nutrients and chemicals off the field and to the stream.



No-Till

Conservation tillage takes several different forms. Each type leaves a different amount of residue or mulch on the surface. No-till and strip-till leave the most residue. No-till means leaving last year's residue undisturbed until planting. Strip-till means no more than one-third of the row width is disturbed with a coultter, residue manager or special shank at planting. When shanks are used, plant nutrients may be injected at the same time. Ridge-till is planting on 4 to 6-inch high ridges with a planter that scrapes off the top 2 inches before placing the seed. Mulch-till is full width tillage using implements and planters that leave at least one-third of the soil surface covered with residue.

Indiana Soil and Water Conservation Districts encourage farmers to adopt conservation tillage. Many districts have

equipment for those who want to try a small amount. SWCD's can also put producers in touch with farmers who are using conservation tillage and who are willing to serve as mentors for new users.



Strip Till

Conservation tillage has both significant profitability and environmental benefits. Reducing soil erosion is an obvious benefit of conservation tillage. A 90 percent erosion reduction can be expected when using a no-till system instead of a conventional tillage system. Increasing organic matter is another benefit. Research shows that continuous no-till can increase organic matter in the top 2 inches of soil about one-tenth percent each year. Increased organic matter means less carbon is released into the atmosphere, therefore providing for less pollution. When combined with crop nutrient management, weed and pest management and



Ridge Till

conservation buffers, conservation tillage plays an important role in improving runoff to streams, rivers and lakes. Scientific evidence indicates about 80 percent of the environmental issues related to cropland can be corrected by combining these four management practices.

Wildlife habitat is improved by conservation tillage. The crop residue provides food and shelter. And, when combined with other needed habitat like grassy cover and woody areas result in increased wildlife.



The bottom line of profitability of the farming enterprise also benefits from conservation tillage. Yields are as good or better with reduced or intensive tillage systems when attention is paid to management details. Increased infiltration and increased organic matter are especially important on droughty soils and may help the crop through a persistent dry period. Each tillage trip reduces available moisture by about one-half inch. In many cases the time saved by reducing tillage trips is a key factor. The producer has more time available for other farming activities. No-till can reduce fuel consumption by 3.5 gallons per acre compared to intensive tillage. Finally, less machinery means fewer pieces need to be replaced. Economists report this amounts to a \$5 per acre reduction in costs.

Contact the office at 574-291-7444, ext. 3, for help in considering conservation tillage in your farming operation



Mulch Till



FIELD NOTES

QUICK FACTS ABOUT AMERICA'S PRIVATELY OWNED LAND

More than 70 percent of the land in the United States is privately owned.

Details: Fewer than one in three acres of land are publicly owned. The water we drink or swim in, the air we breathe, and the wildlife we enjoy - all this is most dependent on how well natural resources on private land are conserved. Today total land area in the U.S. is 1.891 billion acres. Private land accounts for about 73% of the total land area, federal land about 21%, and state and locally owned land about 6%. Of the privately owned land, rangeland and pasture account for about 4 of every 10 acres, while cropland and forest land each account for about 3 of every 10 acres.

Every minute, the United States loses agricultural land the size of six football fields.

Details: That's more than 3.2 million acres a year of agricultural land being developed for other uses, twice the conversion rate of the 1980's. More agricultural land was converted to other uses in the past 5 years than the previous 10 years. The math and stats: A football field is roughly the size of an acre, 3.2 million acres in a year is 6 acres a minute.

If we could save the topsoil lost from private land in the U.S. each year, every person would have half a dump truck load (7 tons) of topsoil.



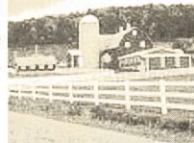
Details: Soil erosion on private land was cut by a third in the 1980's and early 1990's, but erosion rates have

been level since 1995. We still lose 1.9 billion tons a year from private land. It clogs rivers and lakes. The math: 7 tons soil loss per person, a dump trucks holds 15 tons of topsoil.

Americans spend more than 10 times as much to fish and watch wildlife as they do to protect the private land that produces fish and wildlife habitat.

Details: Americans spend \$18 billion annually to watch wildlife and \$24 billion on expenses related to fishing; agriculture budgets for conservation on private land are less than \$4 billion a year.

The bulk of the land in the United States is in the hands of a few people.



Less than 2 percent of the population, about 4.5 million individuals, own the U.S. farm and ranch land that makes up 70 percent of the land in the country.

U.S. farmers produce three times more food than they did 60 years ago, but food supplies are still a concern for the future.

Details: World population is expected to increase by 33 percents in the next 25 years to 8 billion people; the U.S. population is expected to increase by more than 20 percent to 33.5 millions.

Nearly 90 percent of the rain and snow that makes its way to Americans for their use first falls on private land.

Details: The way that land is treated affects the quality of water for most Americans. Good news from an assessment in 1994: two out of three

river miles assessed were found to be good quality, with no impairments to uses. Bad news: one of three miles was impaired, and private land contributed to the poor water quality in a majority of cases.

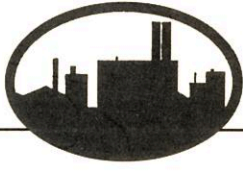
The nation depends on privately owned forest land for half our timber and pulp supply.

Details: This private forest land, most of which is found east of the Mississippi River, also sequesters carbon, gives habitat to many wildlife species, and reduces soil erosion. The problem: 40 percent of the privately owned forest land, an area nearly the size of the state of Texas, needs better conservation treatment. Of the 395 million acres of private forest land, more than 150 million acres needs treatment.

Loss of agricultural wetlands has slowed dramatically, to less than 6 percent of what it was in the 1950's and 1960's.

Details: while the nation has not yet reached the goal of no net loss of wetlands, programs to restore wetlands and efforts to discourage draining of wetlands have helped close the gap on agricultural land. Millions of acres of wetlands were drained in the first half of the last century. More recently, from 1954 to 1974, about 400,000 acres of wetlands were drained in the U.S. each year, with few acres restored. In that 20 year period, an area the size of the state of Maryland was drained. In comparison, from 1992 to 1997, there was an annual net loss of about 24,000 acres.





URBAN MEANDERINGS



The Scoop on Dog Feces

According to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association, four in ten households in the United States contain at least one dog living in their homes. In 2000, it was estimated that 68 million dogs walked through our city parks and streets, state parks, and beaches in the United States. From this total, 45% were considered large breed dogs weighing over 40 pounds. Now consider the fact that 40% of dog owners do not pick up after their pets. Most pet owner's feel that this is not a big deal and eventually it will go away. Dog waste does not just disappear. It ends up in our lakes, rivers, streams, and oceans from storm water runoff. So this problem can cause a public nuisance, and also impairs our watersheds.

The Big Deal

3.6 billion pounds of dog waste are produced annually in the United States. This is enough to cover a one foot layer over 800 football fields. Now imagine 40% of that total ending up in our waters that we use for recreation and for drinking water. The problem with dog feces is that it contains E.Coli, fecal coliform, Salmonella, and Giardia which pose health threats to humans and other creatures. One particular study found that a single gram of dog waste contained 23 million fecal coliform bacteria. The other problem is that tapeworms and roundworms can also be introduced to the environment and can be picked up by other dogs or children playing in the vicinity.

Studies have shown that many bodies of water are impaired due to fecal contamination from dog waste. According to the EPA, a small bay approximately 20 square miles was impacted from two to three days of droppings from a resident population of 100 dogs living along the bay. This small population of dogs produced enough bacteria to temporarily close the beaches to swimming and shellfishing and elevated nitrogen and phosphorus levels. Studies performed along the Four Mile Run near Washington, D.C. found that the source contaminants entering the watershed were from the 12,000 dogs living in the area. It was said that these dogs produced 5,000 pounds of waste daily! Lake Tahoe is experiencing a similar dilemma of an estimated population of 15,000 licensed dogs living around the lake's basin. The average size dog weighs in at 45 pounds and produces an estimated 13 pounds of nitrogen and 2 pounds of phosphorus annually. This equates to 90 tons of nitrogen and 15 tons of phosphorus entering Lake Tahoe each year. As a result, an increase in algae growth has impaired the lake's clarity.

What Are Local Communities Doing?

I have seen an increase in local awareness to the problem. The city of South Bend has established "Nuisance Animal Laws" designed to ensure that pet waste is cleaned daily (from owner's yards) and that owners who walk their pets carry scoopers and bags with them. Besides the established city ordinances, signs are also being installed in some of our city parks along the river. In private developments and residential



communities, signs are also being installed to help residents keep their community clean. One particular apartment community went above and beyond. They installed dog walking yards for their residents with canine companions. Each dog walking yard comes equipped with a trash can and plastic bags for immediate cleanup. The yards are fenced in and have a pea gravel base to them.



With its proximity near Juday Creek, it is encouraging to see a residential community becoming proactive in taking necessary steps to prevent potential contamination.

Things That You Can Do to Eliminate the Burden of Pet Waste

- 1) Make sure to keep your yard free of animal waste daily.
- 2) Make sure that cat litter is bagged and disposed of properly.
- 3) Always carry a bag and scooper with you at all times when you are walking your pet.
- 4) While giving animals baths, do it away from streets and storm drains. The chemicals and soap could reach a water body.
- 5) Choose more organic or natural animal food.
- 6) Urge your community to establish dog walking yards and install trash cans with a plastic bag station.
- 7) Set a good example for everyone in your community!

For more information, check out these websites:

- www.epa.gov
- www.poopbutler.com
- www.lteec.org
- www.scientificmethods.com



St. Joseph County Soil and Water
Conservation District
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St. Joseph County Soil And Water

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MISSION

To provide guidance and education to the youth and adults of St. Joseph County and to administer programs to preserve, protect and improve soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources for future generations.

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