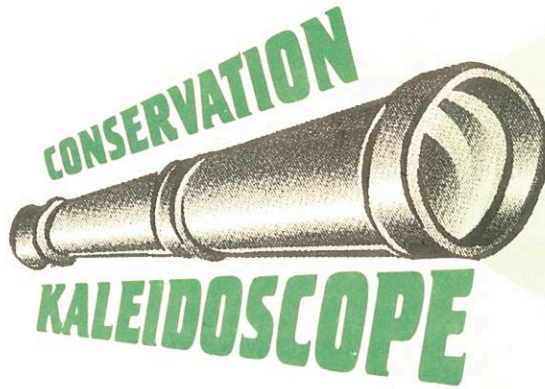




St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

July/Aug/Sept 2008 5605 U.S. 31 South, Ste. 4 South Bend, IN Telephone (574) 291-7444 Ext.3 Editor: Troy Manges
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**CALENDAR
OF
EVENTS**

JULY

- 4 - Independence Day
Office Closed
- 21 - SWCD Board Meeting at
7:00 p.m.
- 28 - St. Joseph County 4-H Fair
Begins (7/28-8/2)

AUGUST

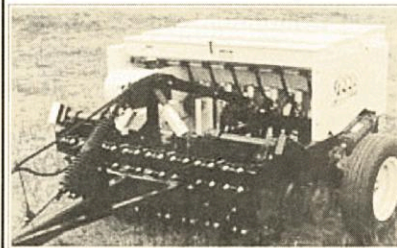
- 2 - St. Joseph County 4-H Fair
Ends
- 18 - SWCD Board Meeting at
7:00 p.m.

SEPTEMBER

- 1 - Labor Day
Office Closed
- 7 - Grandparent's Day
- 15 - SWCD Board Meeting at
7:00 a.m.
- 22 - First Day of Autumn



Warm Season Grass Drill



Plan now for your fall planting with the Truax Warm Season Grass Drill! Truax drills are designed to plant grasses and legumes on a variety of site conditions.

The warm season grass drill is available for your fall planting needs. If you're interested in using the drill this fall, please call the office at (574) 291-7444 ext.3 and ask for Troy.

Some Things I Learned on the Farm

~ Anonymous

- Country fences need to be horse high, pig tight and bull strong.
- Trouble with a milk cow is she won't stay milked.
- Life is simpler when you plow around the stumps.

Seminar: Composting 101

Join us as we discuss the basics of composting! Every participant will receive a free compost bin.

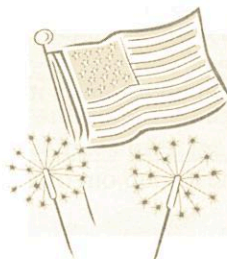
Sponsored by the St. Joseph County SWCD and the St. Joseph County Solid Waste Management District.

Watch for forthcoming information regarding the next Composting 101 Seminar, which will be held in October.
(The exact date is yet to be decided)



**Independence
Day!**

Friday
July 4, 2008



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THE NATURAL EDUCATOR

Invite a Toad to Dinner!



Do you remember catching toads as a child? Most likely the toad you caught was *Bufo americanus*, the American toad. It is one of the most common amphibians found throughout the United States. American toads breed in ponds and wetlands in the spring and lay strings of eggs in the water. After hatching, the newborns spend a few weeks as tadpoles, then emerge from the water as adorable baby toads. Adult toads spend most of their life away from water, and are most active at dusk and on drizzly days. Take a walk at dusk to do a toad inventory--you might be surprised to find that toads already reside in your backyard.

Why should we care about toads? While they may look short, squat, slow, and generally unworthy of attention, toads will stalk and eat unwanted garden pests. Their tongues dart out to catch flying insects faster than our eyes can follow. One of their favorite meals is the cutworm--that nasty garden demolition expert. Toads also can add a beautiful song to your world. Did you know that all toads and frogs (the toad's more water loving relative) have a different song to communicate within their species, just like birds do? Go outside on a warm, spring night and listen. That is when you will hear toads singing a high-pitched, monotone trill to delineate territories and attract mates.

Ponds and natural wet spots attract toads. If you do not have a natural wet spot, create one with a pie plate or similarly sized dish filled with water. Be sure to place it in a shady spot. Toads seek dim, moist spots during the day. Something as simple as a broken clay pot, placed on its side like a cave, works well for a toad shelter. Or, you can build a structure from piled bricks, rocks, or scraps of wood. Garden centers offer attractive toad homes if you want something more stylish for your amphibian guests. You may want to create a small pond or wetland in your backyard.

If you want to give toads an advantage in your yard, reevaluate the chemical fertilizers and herbicides you use. Some amphibian deformities have been traced to overexposure to certain chemicals. In general, amphibians are having a hard time surviving because of habitat degradation and loss.

But, don't give toads a hard time about warts. The glands behind a toad's eyes are not warts, nor can they give you warts. Those glands secrete a toxin--they are a toad's best defense against predators such as cats and dogs. The toxin irritates the mouths of would-be diners.

Maintaining a natural balance in the backyard is difficult. Amphibians should be considered when trying to achieve balance. Toads can live for several years. Given the right habitat, once they move into your neighborhood, toads are likely to stay for years to come. Support a toad; it may turn out to be a different kind of prince in your natural kingdom.



Birds of a Feather: Fun Facts



- Hummingbirds build the smallest-known nests. Some hummingbird nests are no more than an inch wide and an inch deep.
- Bald eagles build some of the biggest nests in North America. One eagle nest was about 9 feet wide and 20 feet deep.
- People in Asia make bird's nest soup out of the dried nests of swiftlets. The nests are made entirely of the birds' saliva.



WOODLAND TIMES

Forestry News Updates for St. Joseph County

22nd Annual Tree Sales Program a Success!

The St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District would like to thank everyone for their help and support for the 2007 – 2008 Tree Sales Program. The 22nd Annual Tree Sales Program started in October 2007, and ended April 19, 2008, at the St Joseph County 4-H Fairgrounds. We are proud to announce that we sold 23,890 trees for the 2007 – 2008 Tree Sales Program. The Tree Sales Program has been very successful over the past twenty two 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, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, St. Joseph County 4-H Fairgrounds, John Manuszak and the Mishawaka High School Waltonian Club, and John Glenn FFA.



PHOTO: Mishawaka H.S. Waltonian Club



PHOTO: John Glenn H.S. FFA

We would also like to remind everyone that we will be sending out the 2008 - 2009 Tree Sales Program Order Forms in October 2008. If you would like to have your name added to the mailing list please give us a call at (574) 291-7444 ext.3. The order form will be available online in October as well; simply go to the website (www.stjoseph.iaswcd.org), and click on the Tree Sales tab on the left.

Tree Life Stages

By: *The Arbor Day Foundation*

So the redbud in your front yard is the same age as that oak in your back yard, but what does that mean to you?

What does that mean to your trees? In this case, caring for these trees could require vastly different tactics. You see, redbuds grow faster and live shorter lives than the mighty oaks. Therefore, even though the two trees may be the same age, they are in very different stages in their life. You wouldn't want to diaper a teenager or ground a grandparent, so pay attention to the life stages of your tree to determine how to best care for, and enjoy your trees.

Tree life stages can be related to human life stages, begin with the tree's first life stage by going online to <http://www.arborday.org/trees/lifestages/infant.cfm>

When you are finished, see how much you learned with the Life Stage Identification Quiz located online at <http://www.arborday.org/trees/lifestages/quiz.cfm>



FIELD NOTES

Assistance for your Farm

By: *Rafael Vega, NRCS Soil Conservationist*

With the arrival of Spring, many of you will be working in the field. Like always, the group of conservationists in the local SWCD and USDA are here to assist you in any way possible. If during this season you see any concerns regarding erosion (gully, ephemeral or sheet / rill), irrigation, livestock waste, or other areas that you would like to improve, we have a wide variety of conservation practices that will help you solve the problem.

Keep in mind that early erosion control will ensure that the top soil of prime quality stays in your field and will not run down into the stream causing other problems. Practices, like no till, hold soil in place better than conventional tillage. Besides those benefits, no till will help you save energy lowering the cost of fuel because you use the equipment less. NRCS may provide compensation for the implementation of different conservation practices. Programs like Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Program and the Conservation Reserve Program SAFE are available for you.



Rafael Vega is the NRCS Soil Conservationist for St. Joseph County. Originally from Puerto Rico, Rafael has been working for the St. Joseph County NRCS since March 2007. Rafael holds a Masters Degree in Environmental Science (Water Resources & Unit Operations). His thesis project consisted of conducting a vegetation index to study the behavior of the electromagnetic energy in the mangroves of Laguna Joyuda, Cabo Rojo Puerto Rico. He has also assisted with other researches in coastal mapping, tropical crops management and the study of nutrients in tropical river basins. Rafael is a valuable asset to the USDA Service Center.

Stop in to introduce yourself to Rafael if you haven't already done so!

Conservation: Our Purpose. Our Passion.

The purpose and passion for conservation is shared among many. It is shared between NRCS employees and partners who help people help the land. And it is shared by the landowners with whom we work. Our passion is manifested through the benefits derived from stewardship of private lands—benefits we all enjoy, such as cleaner water and air, improved soils and abundant wildlife habitat. Learn about our stories, the stories of conservation made possible through a shared purpose, a shared passion and a shared commitment to conservation.

Indiana Farmers...Making a Difference for Conservation

There are hundreds of stories about landowners who have succeeded in reaching their conservation goals with the help of NRCS conservation technical assistance and other programs.

Go to <http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/news/ourpurpose/ourpurpose.html> to view more examples of Indiana's conservation success stories.

A New Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) - SAFE

The new continuous CRP practice titled State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) started its sign up on May 12, 2008. You can sign up for this program at your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office at any time. The State of Indiana has designated four high priority wildlife objectives. They are the Indiana Bat, the Northern Bobwhite Quail, the Henslow's Sparrow and the Sedge Wren/Grasshopper Sparrow.



There are a set number of acres for each designated area and these acres will be enrolled on a first come first serve basis. In St. Joseph County, we have 2 SAFE areas, the Indiana Bat and the Northern Bobwhite Quail. If you are looking to restore forest habitat or to plant native warm season grasses and/or shrubs, the SAFE program may be for you. You can contact the St. Joseph County FSA office at (574) 291-7444 ext. 2.



FIELD NOTES



Ethanol - Beyond the Hype and Hysteria

By: Andy Miller, Indiana Agriculture Director



Pick up any publication today and you will see alarming claims about corn-ethanol driving the world into famine. Two years ago the same publications were heralding ethanol as the savior of America's energy crisis. The truth is somewhere in between, and it is time for a calm, rational analysis of ethanol's contributions and limitations.

The best way to begin a rational discussion is to address some of the biggest myths about ethanol.

Myth #1 - Ethanol is a perfect fuel and is the "silver bullet" the U.S. needs.

- Ethanol is one part of our overall energy strategy to reduce dependence on foreign oil. Ethanol is on track to displace approximately 10 percent of U.S. fuel usage. That's a big deal. At current crude prices, that means more than \$35 billion staying in the United States instead of going to OPEC.
- But, there is no "silver bullet" for our nation's energy crisis. Ethanol does have some real issues, like transportation of the finished product and the impact on other corn-based industries. But the biggest challenge is addressing these issues with innovative ideas. Too many in the industry want to rationalize the issues away, looking instead through rose-colored glasses.

Myth #2 - Ethanol is driving a world famine and record food prices.

- Ethanol is not driving a world famine. The world supply of corn is still greater than demand. That means we aren't running out of corn. In fact, the United States ended the last crop year with almost 9 percent reserve in corn, which is only slightly lower than average. The corn-consuming industry had become accustomed to much higher reserves of 15-20 percent, which drove corn prices below production costs and the accusation that the U.S. was "flooding" the world market with cheap grain.
- Undoubtedly, ethanol has contributed to tightened corn supplies and higher corn prices. But increases in corn price are only partly explained by ethanol and only account for a small increase in retail food prices. An objective analysis determined that ethanol merely contributed to a 0.25 percent increase in U.S. food prices. The bigger culprits in higher food and corn prices are increased demand for food from growing countries like China, the impact of higher fuel prices on food transportation and a weakened dollar.

Myth #3 - Ethanol is destroying the rainforest.

- A group of university researchers have concluded that as the world needs more corn, it can only produce it by using more land, and that land will come only by tearing down the rain forest. This argument fails to recognize the impact of innovation on farming. For example, in the 1930's the United States had more land in corn production than today, but now we produce 6 times more corn on about 10 percent less land. Use of improved fertilizers and other genetic innovations has driven this change and will continue to do so. We don't need hundreds or millions more acres of land to produce more corn. If anything, the current market pressure is accelerating the rate of innovation with some predicting a doubling of corn yields in the next 10 years.

Myth #4 - Ethanol is guzzling water.

- It takes 3 gallons of water to produce a gallon of ethanol. It takes 66 gallons of water to refine one gallon of oil. Therefore, to produce a gallon of gas requires 22 times the amount of water that is needed to produce a gallon of ethanol.
- A University researcher is now trying to make the argument that it actually takes 1,700 gallons of water to make a gallon of ethanol. However, he arrives at that number by allocating for point source water, or rainfall. His number incorporates the amount of rain that falls on a field of corn. Regardless of how the field is used, the rain will still fall. Through technology and innovation more than 95 percent of all corn is grown with no water other than rainfall.

Corn-ethanol is making a meaningful contribution to our country's efforts to reduce dependence on foreign oil; without it our imports of refined gasoline would more than double. Ethanol is not without issues, including the assumption it's a "silver bullet." And ethanol's success has driven cynics and naysayers to surface. But the most important thing for Hoosiers to remember is this. Corn-ethanol, as with all alternative energy, has been a major contributor to new economic vitality bringing more than \$2 billion in new investment, hundreds of new jobs and millions in new farm income. Through innovation we can reduce our dependence on foreign oil and see continued economic growth from agriculture—and that is a fact.

Andy Miller is Indiana's first Agriculture Director. He was raised on a hog and crop farm in Northeastern Indiana, graduated from Purdue University with a degree in agricultural economics and worked in the food industry before accepting a role in public service.



FIELD NOTES



*PHOTO: Eugene Myers and
Kathy Latz,
Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D Coordinator*

89-YEAR-OLD SETS THE PACE FOR FARMLAND PRESERVATION

*By: Bob Neumann,
Earth Team Volunteer for Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D*

Angola -- An 89-year-old St. Joseph County retired farmer known for his agricultural advocacy during his career may well have set a conservation benchmark for his neighbors and other county farmers.

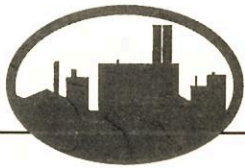
Eugene M. Myers, whose 140-acre farm is located in Madison Township southeast of South Bend, is the first farmer in the county to enroll his land in a Farmland Conservation Easement managed by Wood-Land-Lakes Resource Conservation and Development, Inc., of Angola. The purpose of the non-profit organization is to permanently protect productive farmland from non-farm development. Under the terms of the agreement, Myers can either will, sell or rent his farm to anyone he wishes as long as the land is used for agricultural purposes. The farm's buildings can be altered or razed but not more than one house can exist on the property. Another option is to allow the property to revert to a natural state.

Myers made the announcement to a small group of agricultural interests and officials at his farmstead March 20, which he pointed out was the first day of spring and National Agriculture Day and was quite fitting for the occasion. "This is good farmland and I want to see it preserved. That's why I contacted these people. I'd like to see more [farms] put into it," Myers says. Under the terms of the agreement, Wood-Land-Lakes assumed the responsibility for the protection of the land via its volunteer steering committee, which includes a yearly on-site monitoring to help assure adherence to the restrictions Myers placed on his farm. Kathy Latz, Wood-Land-Lakes coordinator, says that the organization is a public-not for profit organization. "It is for the most part, comprised of private citizens and property owners who are interested in seeing farmlands remain in production basically forever," Latz says. "Once the easement is granted, it is highly unlikely it will ever be rescinded even though all of us who worked on it, are long gone."

Myers' parents originally owned 100 of the acres that comprise the present farmstead. He says he became active in the farm operation in 1939 then bought the farm and additional acreage in 1949. The main portion of the current farm house was built before 1873. For most of his career, he managed the property as a general livestock (hogs, dairy cows and sheep) and field crop (corn, hay, wheat) operation with emphasis on poultry. "For a while we were selling over 200 crates of eggs a week," Myers relates. "I sold mostly in South Bend, Elkhart and Niles to grocery stores, hospitals, restaurants, individuals --just about anyone who would take them. I had hired help to run the chicken house but I did all the selling." Myers was also a salesman of sorts when it came to farm activities and organizations.

He is a charter member of the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District and served on the district board for 44 years. He is well known locally for advocacy of the district annual tree program and other conservation practices. He is also an active recruiter for county Farm Bureau membership. He also incorporated about 26 acres of his farm in special wildlife habitat programs and 11 acres in a forest reserve program. Myers and his wife Mary lived on the farmstead until 2007 when they moved into a local retirement home. She died last September. Latz says that Wood-Land-Lakes has to date enrolled about 1,400 acres of farmland in the Farmland Conservation Easement program. The organization was formed in 1994 to preserve cropland and natural areas in Steuben, Elkhart, LaGrange, Noble, Whitley, DeKalb, and adjacent counties, which includes St. Joseph.

Information about the program can be obtained from Latz by calling her at 260-665-3211, ext. 5.



URBAN MEANDERINGS



What exactly is a 100-year flood?

By: *Ginger Morgan*
DNR Division of Water

The phrase “100-year flood” still befuddles many citizens, as well as lenders and insurers. Many mistakenly think it’s a description of a flood that occurs once every 100 years. Instead, “100-year flood” is an abbreviated way of describing the magnitude of rainfall and subsequent flood event that has a one percent or greater chance of occurring in any given year.

Floods get classified according to their frequency and depth. Classifications bandied about by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) include 10-year, 25-year, 50-year, 100-year, and 500-year floods. A 100-year flood occurs less frequently than a 10-year flood (obviously). But because a 100-year flood carries more volume and depth of water, it’s far more destructive, and presents a more serious threat to human safety.

The NFIP adopted as a national standard a “100-year floodplain” to describe Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs). They show up on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) as Zone A.

Due to the confusion it created, the “100-year floodplain” has been renamed “base flood.” Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) are listed on the flood insurance rate maps and are used on elevation certificates to indicate the expected depth of water should a flood occur. In Indiana, the lowest floors of new buildings constructed in flood hazard areas sit at or above the Flood Protection Grade (FPG), which is two feet above the base flood elevation listed for that location on the current rate map. The chart below shows the statistical chances of flooding a building located in one of these higher-risk areas over different periods of time.

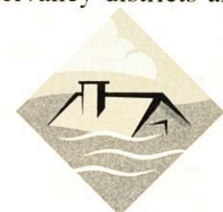
Period of Time	10-Year Flood	25-Year Flood	50-Year Flood	100-Year Flood
1 Year	10%	4%	2%	1%
10 Years	65%	34%	18%	10%
20 Years	88%	56%	33%	18%
30 Years	96%	71%	45%	26%
50 Years	99%	87%	64%	39%

Buildings located in 100-year flood areas must have flood insurance in order to receive a federally backed mortgage loan or home equity loan. Given that many mortgages have a repayment period of 30 years, buildings in areas subject to a 100-year flood have a 26 percent chance of experiencing a flood during the life of the loan. (Interestingly, during that same period, there’s only a 4 percent chance of a fire.)

Next time you hear a resident of a 100-year floodplain say something like “I don’t have to worry about another flood for 97 years, since the last 100-year flood was three years ago,” explain the real meaning of a 100-year flood and impress them with your vast technical knowledge.

This information, paraphrased from the National Flood Insurance Program’s Watermark (Fall/Winter 1998 issue), comes from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Water. The DNR Division of Water operates from a central office in downtown Indianapolis. The division is dedicated to water use management and accomplished this goal in many ways: by keeping records on water wells, by evaluating applications for permits to build in a floodway, by assessing groundwater (amount and quality), by helping create new conservancy districts and river basin commissions around the state, and by offering technical advice on a wealth of topics.

To reach the Division of Water, call (317) 232-4160 during business hours.





St. Joseph County Soil and Water
Conservation District
5605 U.S. 31 South, Suite 4
South Bend, IN 46614

NON PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
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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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