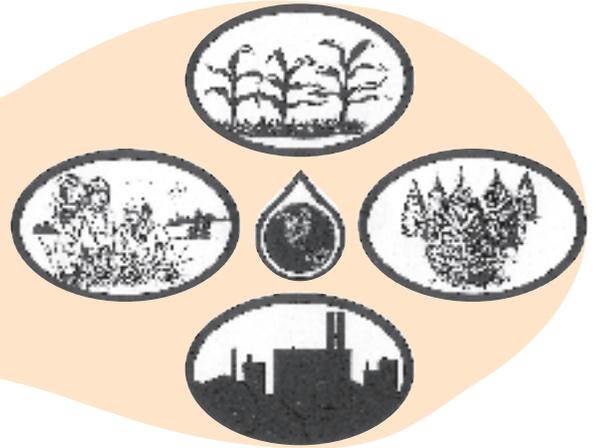




St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District

CONSERVATION KALEIDOSCOPE



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

July/Aug./Sept. 2009
Volume 11, Issue 3

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 3rd-11th

St. Joseph County 4-H Fair
(www.4hfair.com)

July 3rd (Friday)

Office Closed for observance of
Independence Day

July 4th (Saturday)

Independence Day



July 20th (Monday)

SWCD Board Monthly Meeting
7:00 P.M. (Evening Mtg.)
Farm Bureau Meeting Room

July 29th (Wednesday)

Manure Management Field Day
(see p. 4)

August 9th (Friday)

MS4 Field Day (see p. 2)

August 17th (Monday)

SWCD Board Monthly Meeting
7:00 P.M. (Evening Mtg.)
Farm Bureau Meeting Room

September 7th (Monday)

Labor Day (Office Closed)

September 13th (Sunday)

Grandparents Day

September 21st (Monday)

SWCD Board Monthly Meeting
7:00 A.M. (Morning Mtg.)
Farm Bureau Meeting Room

September 22nd (Tuesday)

First day of Autumn

September 26th or 27th

(weekend)
Family Swamp Stomp (see p. 7)



From Farm to Plate ... Keepin' it Local

Did you know...

- **Most produce in the U.S. is picked 4-7 days before being placed on supermarket shelves & is shipped for an average of 1500 miles before being sold.** Locally grown food tastes better and is more nutritious since it was likely picked within the past day or two.
- **When buying commercially grown food at a large supermarket, only 10-18 cents of every dollar goes to the grower.** 82-90 cents goes to various middlemen. Buying direct from growers enable them to keep 80-90 cents of each dollar spent by the consumer.
- **Supporting locally grown food keeps your taxes in check.** For every \$1 of revenue raised by farm, forest, or open space, governments spend only \$0.34 on services. Yet for every \$1 in revenue raised by residential development, governments spend \$1.17 on services, increasing taxes for all taxpayers.



What you can do...

- **Join the growing movement of consumers around the world who are making a little extra effort to find food raised nearby.**
- **Start small and don't expect to change all your eating habits overnight.** Commit to purchasing one thing locally each week or each month, or budget a set amount of money that you'd be spending anyhow to be spent on locally produced food. Once you see how easy it is and you enjoy the great taste, you'll surely go back for more!
- **You might be surprised to learn how many opportunities there are in your community.** The Indiana State Department of Agriculture has a lot of information on Indiana Farmers' Markets at www.in.gov/isda/2342.htm. Another wonderful website for finding local food resources (farmers' markets, family farms, and community supported agriculture) is www.localharvest.org.
- **As always if you have any questions, our office would be glad to help you out, too. Just give us a call!**



Keep Your Drains Free of F.O.G.

In the next issue of our newsletter, we'll be talking about F.O.G. (fats, oils, and greases). We'll also talk more about an easy and economical solution...the **Fat Trapper™**. Call our office or visit our website (www.stjoseph.iaswcd.org/homeowners) to find out more or to order your own **Fat Trapper™ Starter Kit** (Fat Trapper™ & 2 bags @ \$5) and **refill packs** of 5 bags @ \$3 or 10 bags @ \$5.



What's Inside . . .

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



Save Money and Help Stop Pollution with a Rain Barrel

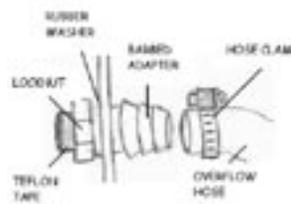
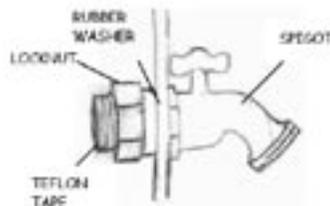
A rain barrel is a modified container used to catch and store rainwater from your roof. Capturing rainwater helps keep stormwater pollution out of our streams and sewers while providing a source of free water to homeowners. It is estimated that nearly 40% of household water is used for lawn and garden maintenance. Collecting and reusing rainwater can help save money and improve local water quality by preventing runoff and increasing infiltration. A rain barrel can be constructed at home quite easily and for a relatively low cost. You will need a food grade barrel, a few plumbing supplies, and some simple tools.

A good rain barrel has a few important features: a spigot at the bottom to let water out, an overflow hose attached near the top, an opening in the top of the barrel to let the rainwater in from the downspout, and a way to keep mosquitoes out. These key elements can be modified depending on the supplies available and personal taste. The following is a basic outline to get you started.

1) Obtain a barrel. If you are starting with a used barrel make sure that it is food grade, meaning that it had a food product in it as opposed to petroleum or chemicals. Wash the barrel using a mild household detergent.

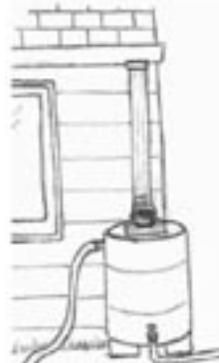
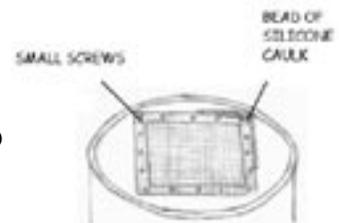
2) Cut a hole in the top of the barrel where water can enter from the downspout. You will also use this hole for access as you assemble the barrel so it will need to be large enough to allow you to reach inside to the bottom of the barrel.

3) Drill a hole approximately 2" from the bottom of the barrel for the spigot assembly.



4) Drill a hole approximately 3" from the top of the barrel for the overflow assembly. The overflow hose will divert water away from the foundation of the house once the barrel has filled to capacity.

5) Cover the hole in the top of the barrel with screen. Screw down and seal the edges with silicone. The screen will help keep debris from your gutters from entering the barrel as well as working to keep out mosquitoes.



6) Place the rain barrel on a level, elevated base (such as 2 concrete blocks) next to the downspout. The rain barrel will be quite heavy when it is full so it is important to make sure that it is stable. The added elevation will make it easier to attach a hose or place a bucket beneath the spigot.

7) You will need to shorten the downspout to allow water to enter the rain barrel. Save the piece of downspout that you cut off so you can reattach it in the winter when you won't be using the rain barrel.



For additional details and ideas, as well as a list of materials you will need to build your very own custom rain barrel, visit our website at www.stjoseph.iaswcd.org/library.html

GOT QUESTIONS?
Call our office
@
574-291-744 ext 3

MS4 Field Day
Date & Location: Fri., Aug. 7, 2009 at the Eddy St. Commons construction site in South Bend
Time: TBA, but likely morning until lunchtime

- Showcasing unconventional design elements that reduce impact
 - Erosion and sediment control practices
 - Demonstrations





My new trees are in the ground...now what?

The St. Joseph County SWCD held its 23rd Annual Tree Sale on April 18, 2009. Through pre-orders and extra sales on pick-up day, a total of **17,327** trees were distributed throughout our community. It is our hope that through this yearly tree sale, we can promote conservation, wildlife habitat, energy efficiency, and beauty in our local neighborhoods.

If you planted trees this spring, here are a few things you might need to know about how to care for them during their first years.

Mulching

Mulch is a good way to help trees maintain moisture, especially during hot summer months. It can also keep the ground at a more even temperature, and suppress weeds. A variety of different mulches can be good for trees, including straw, wood chips, shredded bark, and peat moss. Spread mulch under the tree in a 2-4 inch layer, and be sure to keep the mulch away from the trunk of the tree. If mulch is in contact with the trunk, it can keep the bark too moist, promoting fungi growth and parasites.

Watering

Young trees should be watered after planting, and follow-up watering will help it thrive during its first year. Keep the soil moist, but not too wet. Check under the mulch, and if it is dry, then water. In the absence of rain, trees should be watered once a week, or more often in very hot weather, especially if the tree is very young or in a particularly hot spot. Once fall arrives, watering can be less frequent. By its second year, the tree should be fine without watering, unless there is a drought.

Fertilizing

Should trees be fertilized? In many cases, no. Trees in their first year of planting should not be fertilized; they still have high levels of nutrients from the nursery and over-fertilizing them can cause damage and stunt their growth. Trees do, like all plants, require certain amounts of nutrients to grow to their potential. In a forest environment, the nutrients a tree needs are usually present. In an urban setting, in disturbed urban soils, there may sometimes be a deficiency that will affect tree growth and health. If you think your tree needs to be fertilized, it is best to have the soil tested, and use the results to choose the type and amount of fertilizer to apply. Just keep in mind that the amounts and combinations of nutrients a tree needs are not the same as those your lawn or corn field needs, so be sure to use a fertilizer specific to the tree's needs. And if your tree seems to be growing fine without fertilizer, then let it be!

Pruning

Newly planted trees should be pruned sparingly; just to take off any branches damaged before or during planting. Wait until the tree has had a full season to grow before doing any corrective pruning. When you do prune, make sure you do it in a way that will help, not hurt, the tree. Small branches can be pruned with pruning shears. Cut just outside the branch collar, or, on a branch, at a lateral

branch or bud.

With large branches, you must take extra care to prune properly so that the bark below the branch collar does not get ripped off. Make the first cut from below, outside of the branch collar, and only halfway up through the branch. The second cut is further out, cutting the whole way through. Then, with the main weight of the branch gone, you can safely cut just outside the branch collar.



Look for the 2010 pre-sale tree flyers coming this fall. If you are not on the tree pre-sale mailing list and would like to be, please call our office at 574-291-7444, ext. 3. Also, if you would like more information about planting and caring for your trees, give us a call or visit our website at www.stjoseph.iaswcd.org/library.



Pictures: International Society of Arboriculture



"Out of the long list of nature's gifts to man, none is perhaps so utterly essential to human life as soil." ~ Hugh Hammond Bennett - 1935



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Montana State Conservation Named New NRCS Chief—*March 24, 2009, Washington*—Dave White, who served as the Montana State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, was today appointed to serve as the Chief of the agency. White served as Montana State Conservationist from 2002 to 2008, working from the state office in Bozeman.

“Dave White’s extensive experience working with NRCS and at the local, state and national levels is exactly what we need during this time of economic uncertainty and renewal,” said Agriculture Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack. “Dave’s expertise and advice will be particularly valuable as we implement the 2008 Farm Bill and work to achieve President Obama’s goal for renewing America and combating global change.”

White served in the Senate Agriculture Committee where he helped craft the Conservation title for both the 2002 and 2008 Farm Bills. He served on the White House Task Force for Livable Communities during the Clinton Administration. White was named Acting Chief of NRCS in January.

Following are excerpts from his “hello” letter to NRCS staff.

Greetings, NRCSers!

As you may know, I was officially named the Chief of NRCS last week. I am honored and grateful to Secretary Vilsack and President Obama for placing their confidence in me and giving me the opportunity to lead this amazing agency of ours. It is humbling to be in this position - I sit in the office Hugh Hammond Bennett [the first Chief] once occupied - and it is my highest honor to be able to work with you. I started work for our agency as a conservation aid and was taught the value of what we do by a dedicated technician and DC. I know firsthand how NRCSers contribute to the well-being of our natural resources and how everyday we make a difference both in the lives of Americans and to the country as a whole. A lot has changed since my early days, but the quality, competence, and dedication of NRCS employees is just as good today as it was then.

Over the next few years, working together, we will build on our Agency's proud legacy so that the generations that will

surely follow us can enjoy the same bounty as we do today - a healthy productive land, cleaner air and water, abundant wildlife, and a better environment for all. We will work to address global climate change, energy, hypoxia, and a host of other critical resource issues. We will implement the Farm Bill programs - fairly, effectively, and with common sense. And, we will do it in partnership with our nation's farmers, ranchers, and forest land owners - and with respect for their goals, aspirations, and economic situations.

To achieve these things, we must work together as never before. Where needed, we must repair and strengthen our partnerships. At the same time we must broaden our outreach to work more closely with agricultural, organic, sustainable, and conservation groups across the spectrum. Our doors must be open to everyone and, regardless of where we are, we must treat all our customers with respect...I have faith in our abilities, but we must pull together for a common cause. My commitment to you is that I will get up early, stay late, and work hard in between to help us achieve success. I will start every day thinking about how we can advance the cause of conservation. I ask for your help, your support, and your commitment in this effort.

More than 30 years ago, I fell in love with an organization called the Soil Conservation Service - and although our name has changed - that love remains undiminished to this day.

Thanks for all the good wishes - I'm grateful for your support. I look forward to working with you with a burgeoning sense of self confidence.

Dave White
Chief, NRCS

Wednesday, July 29, 2009, Noble County — Manure Management Field Day

Focus: The “challenge” of manure management with no-till/reduced tillage systems and highly erodible land

Location: **Whiteshire Hamroc Farm** in **Noble County** (a foundation swine genetics company at 4728N 200W, Albion, IN)

10:00 a.m.-Noon: Overview of Whiteshire Hamroc operation (economics of manure, historical manure applications vs. current methods, and fertility management)

After Lunch: Field demonstrations on the **Dudley Parker property** (also in Albion, IN)

Lunch: Free of charge to first 100 who **pre-register** by contacting the **Noble County SWCD** at 260-636-7682, ext. 3.

Sponsors: Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D and the Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steubon, St. Joseph, and Whitley County SWCDs.

Watch for more information in the Farmers Exchange or contact the Noble County SWCD.





The 2008 Farm Bill Is Here – Which Program Is Right For You?

The conservation provisions in the **Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill)** will provide conservation opportunities for farmers and landowners for years to come. The new provisions build on the conservation gains made by producers through the 1985, 1996 and 2002 Farm Bills. They simplify existing programs and create new programs to address high priority environmental goals.

Conservation programs under the 2008 Farm Bill include:

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

– This is a program for “working land”. Eligible participants are offered financial and technical help to install structural practices and to implement management practices on agricultural land. These practices include, but are not limited to: animal waste storage facilities, cover crops, no-till, intensive grazing, and nutrient/pest management. New this year in the EQIP program is assistance for organic farms and forestry initiatives.



Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) – This program offers landowners the opportunity to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property. WRP offers financial and technical support to establish long-term

conservation and wildlife practices and protection.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive program (WHIP) – This program provides financial and technical support for conservation-minded individuals who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat on agricultural ground and non-industrial private forest land.



Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) – This is a conservation program that emphasizes support for grazing operations, enhancement of plant and animal biodiversity, and protection of grassland under threat of conversion to other uses.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) – This program is administered by the Farm Service Agency with technical support provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other partners.

This program helps producers and landowners safeguard environmentally sensitive land. In exchange for planting long-term grasses, trees and/or wildlife areas, the participant receives rental payments and cost share assistance.



Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – This is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical support which encourages producers to address resource concerns in a

comprehensive manner by 1) improving, maintaining and managing existing conservation activities and 2) undertaking additional conservation activities. For those who have been actively using conservation methods and practices, this program is for you!

We will accept applications for these programs at any time.

Please feel free to visit with us regarding your natural resource issues.

Our staff will be glad to help you decide which of these programs fits your needs.





NRCS EXTENDS ORGANIC INITIATIVE SIGN-UP

INDIANAPOLIS, May 26, 2009 —State Conservationist Jane Hardisty of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced today that sign-up for the new Organic Initiative has been extended in Indiana.

The new Organic Initiative, funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), was introduced earlier this month. Organic producers and producers in transition to organic farming were to submit applications to the NRCS by May 29, 2009.

"Because of delays that producers are experiencing in getting into their fields due to the heavy rains, Indiana NRCS is waiving the deadline for Organic Initiative applications," said Hardisty. "In an effort to give producers time to respond, we are implementing a continuous sign-up for this Initiative."

Hardisty encouraged organic producers to come in and take advantage of the special funding for organic producers as soon as possible. "While we accept EQIP applications from organic producers at any time, it is important for producers to know that there are certain dates when applications get ranked and funded throughout the year," said Hardisty. "After August 15, 2009 the dollars that Indiana has not spent on the Organic Initiative may go to other states."

The 2009 Organic Initiative will be administered by NRCS. Interested producers should contact their NRCS district conservationist at a USDA Service Center to determine eligibility. Additional information on the 2009 EQIP Organic Initiative is available at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip.

For St. Joseph County residents who are interested in the 2009 Organic Initiative, give our office a call at 574-291-7444, ext. 3 and we'd be happy to assist you.



Stanley Clark Middle School Competes at the 2009 National Science Olympiad Competition

May 14, 2009— 7th and 8th graders on the Stanley Clark Science Olympiad team traveled to Augusta, Georgia to compete in the National Science Olympiad Competition. For the 2nd year in a row, the team earned the honor of competing at the national level by finishing as one of the top teams in the state of Indiana. The teams at Nationals represent the top 1% of teams competing throughout the United States. In all, there were 60 teams at Nationals, and they 48 different states. The Stanley Clark Team competed in all 23 scored events plus trial events. As a team, Stanley Clark finished 23rd which place them in the top half of the competition. In addition, several team members received individual medals by placing in the top 6 in their event.

Coaches for this remarkable team were Mrs. Dru Wrasse (St. Joseph SWCD Board Member and retired 5th & 6th grade Science teacher at Stanley Clark) and Mr. David Walsh (Stanley Clark 7th grade English teacher). Mrs. Wrasse and Mr. Walsh trained the team by utilizing a number of volunteers and resources, including some assistance from the St. Joseph County NRCS and SWCD.

Congratulations to all! Your hard work paid off!!

No-Till/Warm Season Grass Drill Available — **Have you thought about installing wildlife, pasture or hay plantings on your property?** Last year, thanks to the warm season grass drill available to residents of Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties, through the St. Joseph County SWCD office, area landowners planted about 100 acres of these plantings. **How much does it cost?** If you are interested in planting pastures and hay, there is a \$50 flat fee for the first five acres, and over five acres entails an additional \$5 per acre charge. If you'd like to plant warm season grasses, food plots, and/or filter strips, there is a \$25 flat fee regardless of how many acres you plant. These fees are used to help maintain the drill for future use. **What kind of drill is this?** The drill is a Truax FLEX Series Grass Drill. It has a planting width of 6 feet and has three seed boxes for a variety of seed plantings: (1) Front Seed Box -- for small seeds like wildflowers, clover, and alfalfa; (2) Middle Seed Box -- for warm season grasses or prairie grasses like Indian grass, Big Blue Stem, and Little Blue Stem; and (3) Back Seed Box -- for cool season grasses like Orchard Grass, Timothy and Ryegrass and food plot seed like sunflowers and sorghum. Using a tractor to pull the drill requires a minimum horsepower rating of 50, with a place to hook up two hydraulic hoses for raising and lowering the drill. **How do you get started?** *Simply give us a call at 574-291-7444, ext. 3 and ask for Katie Kurtz, who can answer any additional question you may have and get you on the schedule for using the drill.*



THE NATURAL EDUCATOR

Recycling and you!

We have all heard of the 3 R's: **RECYCLE, REUSE, and REDUCE**, and most of us are recycling. At least we should be, since curbside recycling and use of a compost pile is available to almost all of us. But I'm afraid that we have reached a plateau and there is still so much work for us to do.

Just the other day at the gas station I saw a gentleman throw two empty cans of pop in the trash and I know from his license plate that he can recycle at his home. So why throw them away? My guess it is just easier. I am sure that he felt that it is only two cans, so what's the big deal?

Well it *is* a big deal. For instance, recycling just one aluminum can saves enough electricity to operate a TV for up to 3 hours, but it can take 80 to 100 years for one aluminum can to decompose in our landfills.

Going green is all the rage now, which is well and good, but *talking the talk* does not cut it. We need to *walk the walk* and that means *every time*, not just sometimes. Each time we recycle something we save natural resources and I do not care if they are renewable (able to be replaced in one's lifetime) or non-renewable, our resources are not endless—they can run out.

In the 1970's, I remember people saying that by the year 2000 we would run out of oil. Well we did not, thanks to the gigantic changes in technology. But we are on the downhill slide for oil production, so why throw away plastic (which is made from oil) when we can recycle it and help to stretch this vital resource?

Every time we throw something in the landfill it's like putting it in a Tupperware time capsule—it lasts for nearly forever. Landfills are designed to be sanitary and odor-free, so instead of allowing garbage to decompose naturally, they end up preserving it.

Excavations of landfill sites have

revealed newspapers that are still readable after almost 40 years, 10-year-old carrots that are brown on the outside but still bright orange and edible on the inside, and 20 year-old steaks that still have meat on the bones.

If it can be diverted away from a landfill by some means, it should be. Nothing belongs in a landfill that can be used again, period.



The 4th "R"
Yes, there is one more "R"...
RETHINK

If you look at the recycling symbol, there is no beginning or ending. So if you are serious about recycling, your commitment should be never-ending. If you are committed, you will be recycling at home, on the go, and at work.

If your workplace doesn't have recycling program, why not start one? It is really not that difficult, it doesn't cost much and it doesn't take up a lot of time. If you work for a small company, simply purchase some recycling bins and when they are full take them to Green Tech at 2500 Green Tech Dr. in South Bend (574-232-6000). Presently, Green Tech accepts paper and plastic at no cost. They also accept pretty much any non-hazardous recyclable material, including construction debris and electronics, but there could be a fee for these types of materials.

If your company is larger, call your waste disposal company and ask for a cardboard/paper bin and pick-up service. While there will be a charge, it is usually a little less than your curbside

trash pick up cost, so you will end up saving money and the environment. WIN-WIN for all.

BUY BUY BUY
Your recycling back!

Another part of rethinking is to buy your old stuff back. Whenever you buy a product that is in packaging, look for the recycling symbol. If there is a brand that uses recycled materials for packaging, use that brand. Look for the recycling symbol especially on plastic containers. There will be a number inside of the symbol. 1 & 2 are the easiest to recycle, 3 & 4 are still pretty easy, and 5 & 6 are sometimes hard to find a facility to recycle. If the number is higher than 6, put the item in back on the shelf and try another brand.

And do not be afraid to open your mouth if you can not find what you want. Speak to the store manager, email the company—it's up to you to let them know what you want.

Bottom line: **RECYCLE, REDUCE, REUSE, RETHINK...**it is up to you!

FAMILY SWAMP STOMP **September 26 or 27, 2009**

Come join me, Rick Glassman from the St. Joseph County SWCD, for this family fun day at **Kingsbury Fish & Wildlife Area**. I have been taking school groups on the swamp stomp for 18 years now and I been asked to do a Family Stomp, so we are going to give it a try. We will meet at Kingsbury FWA and explore their 350 acre wetland marsh—and I do mean explore, as we will be walking through the marsh. I have to wait until August to finalize the date but it the weekend of September 26-27. Call the office for complete details, directions and above all, what to bring and wear.

Note: Kingsbury FWA is a great place to hike and ride bikes so plan on making a day of this family adventure.



ST. JOSEPH COUNTY SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
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Paul Williams III
Dru Wrasse

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.

GET INVOLVED

The St. Joseph County SWCD continues to grow and expand into new areas of resource conservation every year. This growth is possible because of the continued time contributed by our Supervisors, Associate Members and volunteers, and the financial support of our Affiliate Members. If you would like to learn more about us, or if you are interested in learning more about membership options or volunteer opportunities, visit our website at www.stjoseph.iaswcd.org or give us a call.

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