



St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

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2903 Gary Drive, Ste 1, Plymouth, IN 46563
Website: stjosephswcd.org

Telephone (574) 936-2024
e-mail: info@stjosephswcd.org

Indiana NRCS District Conservationists are Ready to Help Landowners

Indiana's agricultural producers who want to improve natural resources and address concerns on their land are encouraged to sign up early for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) through the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). While the application deadlines are not currently set, Jerry Raynor, NRCS State Conservationist, anticipates an application deadline in late December.

"While we take EQIP and CSP applications throughout the year, those not submitted by deadlines are deferred for future consideration. I encourage producers with resource concerns on their land to work with their local district conservationist as soon as possible to get the process started, ensuring your application is submitted in a timely manner," Raynor said.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program available for agricultural producers. Through EQIP, NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to install conservation practices that reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, improve soil health, improve water and air quality, and create wildlife habitat.

Many applicants are interested in using funds to address soil erosion and water quality issues on their land. However, funds are also available for pasture and grazing land, confined livestock operations, organic producers, drainage water management, invasive plant control and wildlife habitat improvement.

EQIP also has several state and national initiatives that address specific concerns within geographic regions of the state. While these initiatives use EQIP funding, landowners that apply for funding in one of the initiatives will not compete against the general EQIP funding pool.

"Indiana's farmers have already made great strides in helping to improve their resource concerns. With these targeted dollars, they will be able to do even more to impact the health of our streams and rivers," Raynor said.

The state and national initiatives include the following:

- **Historically Underserved Farmers:** This fund category is for applicants defined as socially disadvantaged, veteran, limited resource or beginning farmer.
- **National Organic Initiative:** NRCS provides assistance to help producers implement conservation measures in keeping with organic production. Producers who are certified organic, transitioning to organic or exempt from organic certification are eligible for this initiative.
- **National On-Farm Energy Initiative:** NRCS provides assistance to quantify how energy can be used more efficiently to reduce input costs, increase productivity and reduce air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. This initiative offers assistance for Ag Energy Management Plans (AgEMPs) and certain energy conservation practices.
- **Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative – Monarch Butterfly:** The Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project is a multi-state effort focused on increasing monarch habitat on private lands through plantings of milkweed and nectaring forbs as well as managing pesticide use in proximity to monarch habitat.
- **Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative – Bobwhite Quail:** The goal of this initiative is to convert tall fescue and other non-native forages to native grasses and forbs and develop prescribed grazing plans to address the habitat needs of bobwhite quail and associated grassland/shrub land species. This category is available statewide on land which overlaps one of the Indiana DNR C.O.R.R.I.D.O.R.S. priority areas.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

CSP is the nation's largest conservation program for producers who are already established stewards and who want to add more conservation benefits on their land, such as improved water and soil quality and enhanced wildlife habitat.

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“CSP helps private landowners build their business while implementing conservation activities that help ensure the sustainability of their entire operation,” said Raynor. “The program provides many benefits including increased crop yields, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements and increased resilience to weather extremes.”

Through CSP, agricultural producers and forest landowners earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, ecologically-based pest management, forest improvement and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat – all while maintaining active agriculture production on their land. CSP also encourages the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and management techniques, such as precision agriculture applications and on-site carbon storage and planting for high carbon sequestration rate, and soil amendments to improve water quality.

CSP is for private working lands including cropland, pastureland, nonindustrial private forest land and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of a tribe. Agricultural producers wanting to enhance current conservation efforts on their land

are encouraged to apply.

Information about CSP, including national and state ranking questions and enhancement descriptions, is available at www.nrcs.usda.gov/csp. This one-stop shop, which provides information to help individuals determine whether CSP is right for them, will be continually updated as more information becomes available.

Producers interested in EQIP or CSP are encouraged to contact their local NRCS field office to start the conservation planning and application process early. Participants in EQIP and CSP must meet eligibility requirements. NRCS staff will work with producers to determine eligibility and complete the necessary worksheets and rankings in order for the applicant to compete for funding.

For more information about EQIP, CSP and other technical and financial assistance available through Indiana NRCS conservation programs, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/in/programs/financial/eqip/> or contact your county’s District Conservationist, Deborah Knepp at (574) 936-2024 Ext. 4.

What the St Joseph County SWCD Can Do For You

As early as 1935 USDA Soil Conservation Service (now known as NRCS) began to search for ways to extend conservation assistance to more farmers. They believed the solution was to establish democratically organized soil conservation districts to lead the conservation planning effort at the local level. To create a framework for cooperation, USDA drafted the Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Law, which President Roosevelt sent to the governors of all the states in 1937. The first soil conservation district was organized in the Brown Creek watershed of North Carolina on August 4, 1937. Today, there over three thousand conservation districts across the country. SWCDs, or Districts, are local units of government that manage and direct natural resource management programs at the local level. We work closely with other forms of local, regional, and state government, private nonprofits, and educational institutions to provide a high level of conservation service to private landowners. We work to promote the wise use, development, and conservation of our state’s soil, water, and related resources in ways that are relevant to our unique county.

The St Joseph County SWCD is located within the USDA service center in Plymouth. This location allows us to work hand in hand with Farm Service Agency (FSA) and NRCS both of which are our closest federal partners. Together we are all working to achieve the same conservation goals for our county. When you call our office you may get one of the three full time staff of the SWCD or Deborah Knepp, District Conservationist for NRCS. Deborah has been with NRCS for 37 years and assists landowners and farmers with conservation planning and access to various funding programs. Sandra Hoffarth is the Administrative Assistant and has been with the district for 6 years.

Sarah Longenecker is the County Conservationist and has

been with the district for 7 years. She is available to help with free one on one technical assistance which can include:

- ◆ Identifying on farm resource concerns
- ◆ Develop conservation plans to address resource concerns and producer goals
- ◆ Provide custom seed mix specifications, lists of seed dealers and contractors, job sheets, and other resources to facilitate the implementation of conservation practices.
- ◆ Participation in county or federal conservation programs are not required to receive this free technical assistance.

Sam Buchanan is the Environmental Education Coordinator and started with the district in March 2020. She provides many educational opportunities throughout each year for schools and other groups serving students and adults committed to life-long learning within St Joseph County, including:

- ◆ Outreach Programs
- ◆ Outdoor Environmental Lab Development and Enhancement
- ◆ Field Trips
- ◆ One-on-One Site Visits
- ◆ Conservation Field Days and Workshops
- ◆ Special events like Science Alive, Ag Days, and Growing Summit
- ◆ K-12 Annual Conservation Poster Contest
- ◆ Curriculum Development (including remote curriculum)
- ◆ Educational Resources (ex. Augmented Reality Sandbox and Scientific Supplies)
- ◆ Remote learning videos and resources

Contact our office for more information, 574-936-2024 Ext. 4.

St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District 2021 Membership Form

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip

Phone:

Email:

Website:

Please Confirm Your Giving Level

_____ Affiliate Membership: \$25-\$99 _____ Silver Membership: \$250-\$499 *
 _____ Bronze Membership: \$100-\$249 * _____ Gold Membership: \$500 & above

THANK YOU for your support! The many outreach and education projects we provide would not be possible without the help of community members like YOU!

All donors will receive a tax-deductible donation receipt, subscription to the SWCD newsletter, and recognition in our 2020 Annual Report & website.

*Bronze & Silver & Gold Memberships will include everything above PLUS a certificate of recognition, and recognition on the SWCD website will include address, phone number & website.

_____ **I would prefer to make my donation anonymous.**

If you would like to donate to a specific outreach or project/event, please indicate below:

- _____ **General Education and Outreach**
- _____ **Youth Environmental Education Supporter**
- _____ **Annual Meeting Banquet** (Donation must be submitted by 1-15-2021)
- _____ **Conservation Cost Share** (Help install conservation practices such as cover crops, no-till, pollinator habitat, raingardens, filter strips, etc.)
- _____ **Other** (Please Specify) _____

Please make checks payable to "**St Joseph County SWCD**" and mail along with this form to:

St. Joseph County SWCD
2903 Gary Drive
Plymouth, IN 46563

**Want to donate with your Visa, MasterCard, or PayPal account?
Visit our website at www.stjosephswcd.org and click on the "Donate" button.**

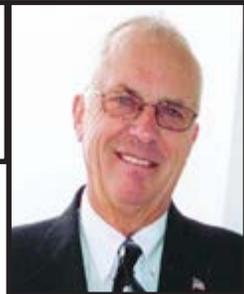


In Memory of James (Jim) LaFree August 6, 1934 - September 28, 2020

Jim was a 30 year member of the St Joseph County SWCD Board. Jim served as an Associate Supervisor since 1990. From 2010-2013 he served as an Appointed Supervisor and in 2011 he was the Vice-Chairman of the board. Jim was a lifelong resident of the South Bend area. On June 23, 1956 in Mishawaka, he married his beautiful wife, Marianne Kreiter, who survives. James was an electrician for 30 years, then became an Electrical Inspector for the city of South Bend for five years and retired in 1999. He was also involved with the St. Joseph County Farm Bureau, the Centre Township Lions Club and was a member of the Friends of 4-H for 50 years. Jim has been a great asset for the district and will be remembered fondly.



To plant memorial trees in memory of Jim, visit:
<http://bit.ly/JimLaFree>



St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership

What's Going On...

*Events hosted by the St. Joseph County SWCD
& Our Partners in Conservation*

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|---|--|
| Nov. 3 - Election Day - County Holiday | Dec. 8 - Monthly Board Meeting - Open to the Public. 9am, location TBA. |
| Nov. 11 - Veterans Day - Office Closed | Dec. 24 - County Holiday |
| Nov. 26 - Thanksgiving Day - Office Closed | Dec. 25 - Christmas Day - Office closed |
| Nov. 27 - County Holiday | Jan. 1 - New Year's Day - office closed |



SWCD Supervisors:

John Dooms, Chair
Jeremy Cooper, Vice Chair
Dave Craft
Mike Burkholder
Dave Vandewalle

SWCD Associate Supervisors:

Chuck Lehman
Randy Matthys
Richard Schmidt
Dave Straughn
Dru Wrasse

SWCD Honorary Members:

Jerry Knepp
Keith Lineback
William Millar

St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation Partnership Staff:

Sam Buchanan, SWCD
Sandra Hoffarth, SWCD
Sarah Longenecker, SWCD
Debbie Knepp, NRCS

Farm Service Agency Staff:

Gideon Nobbe, CED
Devan Herrell
Katie Leitch
Aldona Martin
Tara Wolfe



The St Joseph SWCD & NRCS Staff & Board

Wish you a very happy holiday season.



Are you ready to "GO GREEN" and help us save money and natural resources? We can deliver your "Conservation Kaleidoscope" newsletter by email ... Give us a call or send us an email and tell us you'd like to "GO GREEN" THANK YOU!!!!



Scan me to go Green!