

## MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

### I. CALL TO ORDER - On Wednesday February 17, 2021, at 1:00 pm a zoom meeting was started and at 1:12 pm a regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the St Joseph County SWCD was called to order by John Dooms, Chairman.

#### PRESENT – SWCD

John Dooms, Chair/Supervisor  
Jeremy Cooper, Vice-Chair/Supervisor  
Dave Vandewalle, Supervisor  
Dave Craft, Supervisor  
Mike Burkholder, Supervisor  
David Straughn

#### PRESENT – SWCD/NRCS

Sarah Longenecker, SWCD CC  
Sandra Hoffarth, SWCD AA  
Sam Buchanan, SWCD EEC  
Debbie Knepp, NRCS DC

#### Present - EX-OFFICIO

#### PRESENT – Public

#### ABSENT – SWCD

Chuck Lehman  
Dru Wrasse  
Richard Schmidt  
Randy Matthys

### II. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA – n/a

### III. REGULAR BUSINESS

- a. **Legislative Updates** – (attached) bill tracker is available through email from the IASWCD.
- b. **Indiana Conservation Partnership Updates** n/a
- c. **Minutes: January 19, 2021 board meeting** – Minutes were reviewed and approved as presented.
- d. **Treasurer’s Report: (1/16/2021-2/10/2021)** – The treasurer’s report was reviewed and approved as submitted.
- e. **Approval of Claims (1/16/2021-2/10/2021)** –A motion (Cooper/Craft) was made to approve Claim Nos. 11607-11611 for a total of \$16,763.89. Motion carried.

### IV. OLD BUSINESS

#### a. **St. Joseph Co. Soil & Water Conservation Partnership Staff Reports**

- i. **Field Office Report** – The field office report was presented to the board & reviewed. (Attached)
- ii. **NRCS Talking Points** – Knepp presented the NRCS talking points (attached).

#### b. **Committee Reports**

- i. **Election** – Dooms conducted the first portion of the election: The Election is for a 3 year term of Supervisor of the St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District. Ballots were mailed to all landowners in St Joseph County and advertised in the Farmers Exchange and South Bend Tribune. We have 2 qualified candidates on the ballot; Chris Matthys and Marty Lappin. The ballot will now be opened up to any additional nominations. Any nominees must meet the following Legal Requirements for Elected Supervisor Position: The term of office for the Elected Supervisor is three years. To hold this position, an Individual: must be of voting age, must be an occupier of a tract of land that is located within the district of St. Joseph County; must maintain the individual's permanent residence within the district of St. Joseph County; and must be qualified by training and experience to perform the duties that this article imposes on supervisors. Are there any additional nominations from the floor? <<Wait for a few seconds ... IC 14-32-4-8 requires we ask 3 times>> Once more, are there any nominations from the floor? <<Wait for a few seconds >> For the third and final time, are there any nominations from the floor? If there are no nominations from the floor I’d like to ask for a Motion from a Supervisor to close the nominations. Thank you, Craft/Burkholder for the motion, motion carried. The 2021 election ballots are now closed.
- c. **Designation of Depository** – Hoffarth informed the board that we are able to do mobile deposits with board approval. Question was asked how long we would keep the checks, and Hoffarth said she will keep them with the claims for the approved record of retention timeframe. A motion (Vandewalle, Cooper) was made to approve the use of mobile deposits. Motion carried.
- d. **Virtual Producers Workshop** – Longenecker informed the board there was a test run earlier. Post cards have been mailed and registration is through our website. Agenda has Ray Archuleta speaking for about an hour followed by Nathaniel Ness talking about the struggles and success implementing cover crops and a Q&A with Troy or Debbie to talk about NRCS programs and someone from SWCD for the CWI and other district programs.
- e. **CWI Grant** – (report attached) a motion (Cooper/Burkholder) was made to release \$1,350 from CWI grant funds for 1.8 acres of Pollinator Habitat. Motion carried. This project was completed at a South Bend School. After some discussion a motion (Cooper, Burkholder) was made to pay up to \$600 to cover the additional costs not covered by CWI using district funds. Motion carried.
- f. **(added to agenda) Food Plot Seed** – a motion (Cooper/Craft) was made to release up to \$400 for food plot seed. Motion carried.

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. **Schedules/ Upcoming Events / Any Related Claims** - calendars were handed out explaining upcoming special events & holiday schedules on the back of the agenda.
  - i. **March Board Meeting** – Dooms discussed with new supervisors that we might have to move our meeting back to 7pm even if we are still doing zoom meetings. Hoffarth with check with new supervisors to find the best time for future meetings.

**VI. PRIVILEGE OF FLOOR – n/a**

**VII. ADJOURNMENT – The board meeting adjourned at 2:03 pm by motion (Burkholder/Craft). Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,  
**Sandra Hoffarth**  
Administrative Assistant  
St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District  
2903 Gary Drive, Plymouth, IN 46563  
Email: Sandra.hoffarth@in.nacdnet.net  
[www.stjosephswcd.org](http://www.stjosephswcd.org)

Approved at 3/16/2021 zoom board meeting.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_ *John M. Dooms*  
Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_ *Mark Burkholder*  
Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_ *Dave Caldwell*  
Supervisor



Sandra Hoffarth <hoffarthse@gmail.com>

**FW: [External Email]IASWCD Legislative Update Webinar and Bill Tracker 2.19.21**

1 message

Hoffarth, Sandra E. - NRCS, Plymouth, IN <Sandra.Hoffarth@in.nacdn.net>

Mon, Feb 22, 2021 at 11:05 AM

Newest Bill tracker.

Sandra Hoffarth

Administrative Assistant

St. Joseph County SWCD

2903 Gary Drive

Plymouth, IN 46563

574-936-2024 ext. 4



[www.stjosephswcd.org](http://www.stjosephswcd.org)

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**From:** Joe Schmees <[joseph-schmees@iaswcd.org](mailto:joseph-schmees@iaswcd.org)>

**Sent:** Saturday, February 20, 2021 9:31 AM

**Subject:** [External Email]IASWCD Legislative Update Webinar and Bill Tracker 2.19.21

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SWCD Supervisors and Staff –

Please see the updated legislative bill tracker from Cress below my email here. We are coming into the last week before the mid-point of the session. There are a lot of important issues still on the table, most importantly the budget (HB 1001) and the current 15% reductions to CWI and many other programs, as well as the wetland de-regulation bill (SB 389), among others.

**JOIN US NEXT FRIDAY** at 12 PM Noon on the **IASWCD Legislative Session Update** webinar to get a recap of the first half of the session, and expectations and priorities for the second half. Our lobbyist Cress Hizer will recap the session and important bills and trends, and I will talk about SWCD priorities and actions needed for the second half of the session. You can join using the Zoom link or conference call line below. We hope you will join us!

**IASWCD Legislative Update, Friday February 26 @ 12 PM EST**

**Join Zoom Meeting on web enabled device:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84331166312>

Meeting ID: 843 3116 6312

**Conference Call Line Option:**

1 (312) 626-6799

Meeting ID: 843 3116 6312

**Joe Schmees**

*EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

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**From:** Cresswell Hizer <[chizer@inag.biz](mailto:chizer@inag.biz)>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 19, 2021 1:39 PM  
**To:** Joe Schmees <[joseph-schmees@iaswcd.org](mailto:joseph-schmees@iaswcd.org)>  
**Subject:** IASWCD Bill Tracker 2.19.21



## 2021 Session IN General Assembly

February 19, 2021 Bill Tracker

# First Session of the 122<sup>th</sup> Indiana General Assembly

Committee work in the first half of the session was completed this week and floor votes on surviving bills in each chamber must be conducted by next Monday (House) and Tuesday (Senate) to reach the halfway mark of the session. Bills that did not receive a committee hearing have been deleted from our list.

Governor Holcomb signed the first bill of the session into law on Thursday. SB 1 is now Senate Enrolled Act (SEA) 1 Civil immunity related to COVID-19. Under this new law, Indiana businesses and others now have broad protections from lawsuits by people blaming them for contracting C-19. The law is retroactive to March 1, 2020 and was a top priority of the Governor and GOP lawmakers.

### 2021 Session Deadlines

- 2/22 last day for 3<sup>rd</sup> readings of House Bills
- 2/23 last day for 3<sup>rd</sup> readings of Senate Bills
- 4/19 last day for 3<sup>rd</sup> readings of Senate Bills in House
- 4/20 last day for 3<sup>rd</sup> readings of House Bills in Senate
- 4/29 last day for adjournment of both houses

Bill filings are complete but I will continue to review House and Senate bills that may have impact on us. Below are bills currently of importance to IASWCD. *Please contact me at (317.753.9627) or [chizer@inag.biz](mailto:chizer@inag.biz) with any concerns or needs. Thank you, Cress*

### Useful Links

House Committee Schedules <http://iga.in.gov/documents/d818d017>

Senate Committee Schedules <http://iga.in.gov/documents/85381d73>

[Contact Your Legislator](#)

**TRACKING LIST**

The State of Indiana has made changes to its website, including the website for the Indiana General Assembly. To view any bill in its entirety, click here: <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2021/bills/> Once there, scroll through the list of Senate and House bills filed and click on the bill you want to view. Once you are on the main page for a particular bill, you will need to click on the following options in the upper left side, which are self-explanatory:

Latest Version

Latest Fiscal Note

Bill Actions

Bill Versions

Committee Reports

Conference Committee Reports

If you need any assistance please contact me.

**House**

- **HB 1001:** State budget.
- **HB 1055:** Watershed development commissions.
- **HB 1224:** Craft hemp flower and hemp production.
- **HB 1283:** Urban agricultural zones.
- **HB 1395:** Various natural resources matters.
- **HB 1437:** Electronic communication at public meetings.
- **HB 1496:** Natural resource matters.

**Senate**

- **SB 68:** Conservancy district board meetings.
- **SB 227:** Enforcement of pesticide violations.
- **SB 329:** Flood control district board of commissioners.
- **SB 271:** The department of environmental management.
- **SB 373:** Carbon credit programs.
- **SB 389:** Repeals state regulated wetlands law.

**Other Issues Watch**

**Resolutions are still being filed and as ones of interest are researched, they will be listed here.**

**INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY, STATE HOUSE**

HOUSE TELEPHONE CENTER

317/232-9600

800/382-9842

SENATE TELEPHONE CENTER

317/232-9400

800/382-9467

Formula for e-mailing = S or H (for House or Senate) District [number@in.gov](mailto:number@in.gov). For example, Sen. Vaneta Becker may be contacted using the following e-mail address: [S50@in.gov](mailto:S50@in.gov).

ADDRESSES

The Honorable "First..Last"  
Indiana House of Representatives  
State House, Third Floor  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

OR

The Honorable "First..Last"  
Indiana State Senate  
State House, Third Floor  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

**Thank you for your help!** INAg/Cress Hizer appreciates your willingness to contact legislators when called upon during the session. Without the assistance of the client/association, it would be difficult to pass proactive legislation or thwart detrimental language. Thanks for your support.



Farm Food Fuel Biotech

**Cresswell A. Hizer, CAE**

Principal

5246 N. Delaware

317.753.9627

Indianapolis, IN 46220 [chizer@inag.biz](mailto:chizer@inag.biz)

Lobbying--Public Affairs--Associations--Risk

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## Field Office Report

### January 18 – February 12, 2021

#### General/Miscellaneous

##### Office Work

- Annual Report
- NRCS Annual Practice Reminder Letters - upload to DMS, mailed Marshall and Elkhart County
- March/April Newsletter
- Supervisors Review Survey (Bushong)
- 2021 Donor Thank you letters, update website
- Producer's Virtual Workshop prep

#### EQIP- Environmental Quality Incentive Program

##### Office Work

- Create case file, assess and rank 19 applications
- Process payments for 3 producers – 1 cover crop, 1 pollinator habitat, 1 wildlife habitat monitoring,

##### Field Work

- Site visit to design wildlife habitat, tree planting
- field visit for additional tracts added to cover crop application

#### WRE- Wetland Reserve Program

##### Field Work

- Site visit to develop action plan to eradicate Invasive Species

#### CSP- Conservation Stewardship Program

##### Office Work

- Check cover crop mix seed tags to make sure it meets NRCS specifications

#### CWI- Clean Water Indiana

##### Office Work

- Annual reporting
- Pollinator habitat planting payment processed

#### Wetland Determinations / Highly Erodible Land Determinations

##### Office Work

- Wetland Determinations - 3
- HEL determinations - 6
- 

#### Rule 5/ Rule 13

##### Office/Field Work

- Completed 2 SWPPP reviews

#### Education

Age	Total # Programs/ Hours	Total # People
Youth Education		
Adult Education		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upcoming compost class presentation and handouts</li> <li>• Upcoming rain barrel class presentation and display board</li> <li>• Upcoming preschool program prep</li> <li>• Facebook winter nature activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weaving an energy web lesson plan</li> <li>• Pollution diffusion lesson plan</li> <li>• History of SWCDs presentation</li> <li>• Natural resources presentation</li> <li>• Predator/prey lesson plan</li> </ul>	



<b>Meetings &amp; Trainings</b>	
State Board of Accounts – Annual Financial Reporting NNE IDEA NRCS programs - 3 CRP Forest Management Incentive Wetland Restoration Planning	Conservation Reserve Program Jerry Roach Virtual Retirement Party Virtual Shop visit for planter set up Title VI Tillage Transect CISMA Zoom meeting
<b>Webinars</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Backyard Wildlife Tribal Wildlife Management Managing Native Plants in Forests for Wildlife St. Joseph River Basin Commission Webinar (IDEM) Lake Michigan LAMP and Other Lakewide Initiatives webinar (IDEM)	Office Closed – January 18

<b><u>Comments from the Community</u></b>

# DC Talking Points

## February 2021

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### FARM BILL PROGRAMS

#### **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)**

February 3 is the application deadline for ACEP.

#### **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)**

##### *Reclaimed Coal Mine Lands Project*

February 26 is the second-round application deadline for the Reclaimed Coal Mine Lands Project in southwestern Indiana.

##### *Big Pine Project*

March 19 is the second-round application deadline for the Big Pine Project in northwestern Indiana.

##### *Final Rule*

The final rule for RCPP was announced January 14. NRCS received comments from more than 65 organizations and individuals on the RCPP interim rule. To integrate that feedback, the final rule adopts the interim rule with minor changes made to RCPP that:

- Make explicit special considerations for historically underserved (HU) producer and landowner enrollment, including requiring partnership agreements to denote any authorizations for higher payment rates, advance payment options or other methods for encouraging HU participation.
- Identify ranking criteria for proposals that include developing an innovative conservation approach or technology that specifically targets the unique needs and limitations of historically underserved producers.
- Adjust the rule language to incorporate source water protection as a priority resource concern.
- Remove the list of infrastructure types that would be considered for Alternative Funding Arrangements to avoid confusion.
- Increase the emphasis on conservation benefits and objectives partners seek to achieve for the ranking of proposals.

[View the final rule on the Federal Register.](#)

### \* **USDA URBAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

USDA is seeking members for a new advisory committee on urban agriculture, part of a broader effort to focus on the needs of urban farmers. The 12-person committee will advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production practices as well as identify any barriers to urban agriculture. USDA is seeking nominations for individuals representing a broad spectrum of expertise, including:

- Four agricultural producers (two agricultural producers in an urban area or urban cluster and two agricultural producers who use innovative technology).
- Two representatives from an institution of higher education or extension program.
- One representative of a nonprofit organization, which may include a public health, environmental or community organization.
- One representative of business and economic development, which may include a business development entity, a chamber of commerce, a city government or a planning organization.
- One individual with supply chain experience, which may include a food aggregator, wholesale food distributor, food hub or an individual who has direct-to-consumer market experience.

- One individual from a financing entity.
- Two individuals with related experience or expertise in urban, indoor and other emerging agriculture production practices, as determined by the Secretary.

Any interested person or organization may nominate qualified individuals for membership. Self-nominations are also welcome. Nominations should include a cover letter, resume and a [background form](#). Nomination packages must be submitted by mail or email by March 5, 2021. They should be addressed to Ronald Harris, Designated Federal Officer, Director of Outreach and Partnerships, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 6006-S, Washington, D.C. 20250, or emailed to [Ronald.Harris@usda.gov](mailto:Ronald.Harris@usda.gov).

## **NATIONAL SURVEY FOR PRODUCERS**

The National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP) is conducting a national survey for producers to obtain feedback on specific ways to improve the format, usefulness and value of a conservation plan and improve the delivery of conservation planning assistance.

The survey was developed to expand on the feedback NCP received in previous employee and customer listening sessions in 2018. Many of the comments and recommendations received so far have led to important changes in policy and procedures, new and/or revised training courses, and advances in tools and technology, all geared at streamlining and improving the conservation planning experience.

This survey is an important next step. The results will be used along with earlier feedback to provide producers with an improved conservation planning system that is more personalized and responsive to their needs.

The National Association of Conservation Districts is leading the survey distribution through Survey Monkey. The survey is expected to close on February 15, 2021.

To ensure that we receive maximum participation, each of the non-federal conservation partners (NACD, RC&D, NCDEA, NASCA) is asking their members and employees to share the survey with your farmers, ranchers and forest landowners. The survey is available here: <https://bit.ly/3qGS48m>. Results of this survey will be available in May 2021: <https://www.nationalconservationplanningpartnership.com>.

## **\* TILLAGE TRANSECTS**

The Indiana Conservation Partnership is committed to completing the annual Indiana Conservation Transect in 2021. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, we are confident that by following safety protocols, the value of the data and time spent observing local resource concerns can be met; however, if COVID-19 conditions dictate a change, employee safety will always be our first priority.

All ICP employees will adhere to the following safety protocols:

- If an employee exhibits any COVID-19 symptoms, they will not participate.
- No more than two employees in a vehicle.
- Only two-row vehicles will be used – a driver and the other employee in the second-row seat.
- Remote communications with other staff (in the office, in separate vehicles, etc.) are strongly encouraged for entering data into spreadsheets, navigating to transect points, etc.
- Masks are required and will be properly worn at all times.
- Windows will be cracked to maximize air flow.

To ensure Indiana's consistent set of tillage and cover crops adoption data continues, we are requesting that each county complete a transect in the late winter/early spring of 2021. If for any reason (such as COVID-19, workload, lack of staff or equipment, etc.), your county requires additional assistance to complete the required, please contact Shannon Zezula ([shannon.zezula@in.usda.gov](mailto:shannon.zezula@in.usda.gov)) or Trevor Laureys ([TLaureys@isda.IN.gov](mailto:TLaureys@isda.IN.gov)) and the NRCS and ISDA State Offices will help in any way possible.

#### **DIRECT HIRE AUTHORITY**

Direct-Hire Authority (DHA) allows USDA-NRCS to fill vacancies for specific occupations, grade levels and locations when it can be proven that there is a critical hiring need or a severe shortage of candidates. Direct hire authorities expedite the hiring process by eliminating veterans' preference, rating and ranking, as well as the typical selection procedures. Public notice is required, meaning to use a DHA, a vacancy announcement must be posted on USAJOBS listing board and open to the public. All applicants who meet the basic qualification requirements of the position will be referred to the hiring manager for consideration and may be selected.

NRCS has received approval for Direct Hire Authority in FY21 for 1,525 positions throughout the country including: soil conservationist, rangeland management specialist, soil conservation technician, soil scientist, engineering technician, engineer, archaeologist, biologist, economist, forester and agronomist. Some positions have already been announced and other positions will be posted throughout the fiscal year.

#### **USDA SERVICE CENTER STATUS**

Based on the rise in COVID cases both nationally and within the USDA-Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) workforce, effective December 1, all FPAC offices located in counties with significant COVID-19 infection rates stepped back to either Phase 0 or Phase 1 of USDA's phased reopening process.

By stepping back to either Phase 0 or Phase 1, these offices will be restricting their in-person appointments. All USDA Service Centers are for open for business, and service center staff members from FSA and NRCS will continue to work with producers by phone, email and digital tools.

Producers wishing to conduct business with the FSA, NRCS or any other service center agency should call ahead to confirm and schedule appointments. More information on service center status can be found at <https://www.farmers.gov/coronavirus/service-center-status>, and contact information for local Service Centers is available at <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>.

