

Conservation Kaleidoscope

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Only Rain Down the Drain!

As a kid, did you ever run along the street, splashing in the rain along the gutter? Did you follow it all of the way to the storm drain? It was fun when that storm drain was clogged and the water puddled! Now, as an adult, it's not always fun when storm drains clog, especially when it causes the road to flood. And flooding is just one of the concerns around storm drains.

Did you know that our storm drains flow directly to our waterways? Stormwater (the water from precipitation) enters storm drains and flows through underground pipes. These pipes divert water directly into our streams, rivers, ponds. No treatment, no filters. In natural areas, the flow of water is slowed by plants and has more opportunity to seep into the ground. Urban areas are a different story. We have changed the landscape and provided less opportunity for the stormwater to seep into the ground. Instead it flows across our roofs, lawns, driveways. All of this runoff can cause more flooding and erosion. Plus, as it flows across those surfaces, it picks up pollutants along the way - leaves, litter, fertilizer, oil, pet waste, and more. All of these pollute our waterways, making the water unsafe for humans, animals, and plants.

Luckily, there are easy things we can do to minimize the pollutants entering our waterways!

- ◆ Pick up your trash, and any other you see.
- ◆ Pick up pet waste.
- ◆ Dispose of household chemicals properly.
- ◆ Rake up leaves.
- ◆ Use lawn chemicals properly, according to the labels.

All of these are simple things that really make an impact on our water quality!

Stormwater Community Days

We're starting a new program!

This spring and summer we will be visiting communities around St. Joseph County to talk to groups about stormwater and water quality, and supplying residents with kits to help keep storm drains clean. There will be activities and education for the whole family!

Are you interested? Let us know and we can make a plan!



 St. Joseph County
Soil & Water
Conservation District

**Today's Visions for
Tomorrow's Future**

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What's Going On Under The Covers?



Our signs have started going up all over the county! Where have you seen one?

We're continuing our campaign into 2025 to raise awareness on the need for cover crops and other conservation practices. Visit our website to learn more about the impact of agricultural practices on our soil and water, plus tips on what any homeowner can do to help protect these natural resources.

We also plan to host another Meet Your Farmer gathering! Watch our website and Facebook page for this summer's date!

NRCS Can Help Indiana Landowners Protect Their Farmland and Profit Margin

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is one of 29 agencies under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and is dedicated to helping landowners and communities voluntarily manage natural resources on private lands. With roots dating back to the 1930s, NRCS has been working with farmers, ranchers and private forest landowners across the country to improve soil health, enhance water quality, increase wildlife habitat and protect natural resources for future generations. In Indiana, NRCS partners with local landowners to address environmental challenges on their farms, pastures and forestlands, helping them become stewards of the land while maintaining productive operations.

"Every property is unique, and each piece of land has its own set of natural resource challenges," said Indiana NRCS State Conservationist, Damarys Mortenson. "NRCS offers a range of assistance tailored to help our landowners address specific issues and reach their conservation goals. Our field staff work one-on-one with landowners to develop customized conservation plans that focus on each property's specific needs."

NRCS provides financial assistance through programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) to offset costs, making it easier for landowners to implement sustainable practices. In addition to funding, NRCS offers no-cost technical support, guiding landowners in selecting and executing the best practices for their land.

Improving soil health is the cornerstone of NRCS's mission. Healthy soil is the foundation of productive agriculture and sustainable forestry. By working with Indiana farmers to implement practices such as reduced tillage, cover crops and crop rotations, NRCS helps protect soil, improve its structure and increase organic matter. Building resilient soils can enhance productivity, reduce erosion, improve water infiltration and reduce the need for chemical inputs.

Water quality and erosion control are equally essential in Indiana, where agriculture is vital to the economy. Protecting water quality benefits communities and ecosystems alike, and NRCS provides guidance on practices like riparian buffers, grassed waterways and erosion control structures. These practices help manage runoff, prevent sedimentation in streams and rivers and protect water sources.

Indiana's forests, wetlands and grasslands are home to a wide range of wildlife, and NRCS also helps landowners implement practices that enhance wildlife habitats while supporting land productivity. By managing invasive species, establishing pollinator habitats and creating shelter for wildlife, landowners can sustain biodiversity on their property and contribute to a healthier ecosystem overall.

Working with NRCS means having a trusted partner who understands the unique challenges that Indiana landowners face. For more information about farm bill programs and other technical and financial assistance, please contact the office.

65th Annual Meeting February 7, 2025

St. Hedwig Memorial Center



Celebrate 65 years of conservation with us! Meeting starts at 6:30, dinner at 7:00. Keynote speaker is Matt Meersman of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission speaking on his paddling and

canoe racing experiences. Tickets are \$15 which includes dinner. Contact the office for tickets and more information.

2025!

Producers Workshop February 26, 2025

Lakeville Community Center

This year's workshop will feature Christian Krupke, professor at Purdue, speaking on seed treatments. PARP credits are available and lunch provided.

Visit our website for updates on speakers and to register.



www.StJosephSWCD.org/calendar

Native Plant Sale

We will be selling native plant kits again this spring! Contact the office if you would like us to send you information once the sale is up and running! Check our website for information on last year's sale - www.StJosephSWCD.org/native-plant-kits.



Working Group Updates

SCRAP

St. Joseph County Regenerative Agriculture Partnership

2025 is looking promising! We're starting the year off with an educational and networking event for farmers featuring Ben Hartman from Clay Bottom Farm on January 23rd at Howard Park. This will be a great opportunity for farmers to meet and discuss ideas, tips and tricks. Spread the word to any small farmers you know! Visit our website or Facebook page for more information.



well as our quarterly meetings!

We are also in planning for the rest of the year, including two Small Farm Tours. Watch for information on those as

SMIPP

St. Joseph/Marshall County Invasive Plant Partnership

We are excited about the momentum of the group! 2024 saw an increased number of Weed Wrangles and the formation of Strike Teams. We also formed our first Weed Warriors. These are teams of people that have passion for a certain park and meet on a monthly basis to tackle invasive species. If you want information on starting your own, contact the office! We offer training and some supplies to get you started.

We are also planning a Weed Wrangle and other educational events this spring. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for upcoming dates!





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www.StJosephSWCD.org

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SWCD Honorary Members:

Keith Lineback

Farm Service Agency Staff

Gideon Nobbe, CED
Devan Harrell
Aldona Martin
Diane Stichter
Michael Cuff

Upcoming Events

January

1st - New Year's Day - Office Closed
20th - MLK, Jr. Holiday - Office Closed
21st - Board Meeting
23rd - SCRAP Networking Event
24th - 4th Friday Weed Warriors @ Rum Village

February

7th - Annual Meeting
17th - Presidents Day - Office Closed
18th - Board Meeting
26th - Producers Workshop
28th - 4th Friday Weed Warriors @ Rum Village



Visit our website & watch Facebook for info on events and more!



Contact us to choose to get your
newsletter by email!

Use the QR code to email us at
info@stjosephswcd.org.

