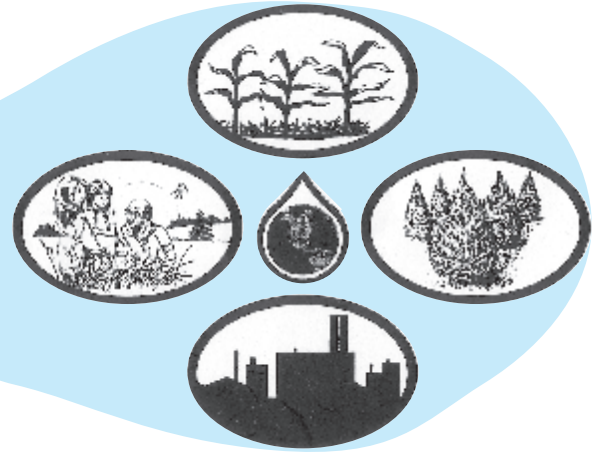




St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District

CONSERVATION KALEIDOSCOPE



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

May/June 2012
Volume 14, Issue 3

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What's Going On...

*Events hosted by the
St. Joseph County SWCD &
Our Partners in Conservation.
Call for Details & to RSVP.*

MAY

4 - FREE PUBLIC EVENT, 2nd Annual Michiana Original Art Rain Barrel Auction, 7PM @ South Bend Museum of Art, located in the Century Center
8 - Primary Election, SWCD STAFF OFF

12 - IUSB Center for a Sustainable Future's FREE Electronic Waste Recycling Fest 2012, 9AM-2PM @ parking lot on 20th & Vine. *Info:*

www.iusb.edu/csfuture/ewaste

21 - SWCD Monthly Board Meeting, 7PM @ Our New Office - **PUBLIC & NEW MEMBERS ALWAYS WELCOME!**

28 - Memorial Day, CLOSED

JUNE

18 - SWCD Monthly Board Meeting, 7PM @ Our New Office - **PUBLIC & NEW MEMBERS ALWAYS WELCOME!**

22- FREE PUBLIC EVENT, Project WET Workshop, led by our own Environmental Educator, Rick Glassman @ Bendix Woods Cty Park, 8:30AM - 2:30PM) ... *RSVP Required by June 1st*

JULY

16 - SWCD Monthly Board Meeting, 7PM @ Our New Office - **PUBLIC & NEW MEMBERS ALWAYS WELCOME!**

TBD - FREE PUBLIC EVENT, SWCD's Filter Strip/Soil Health Twilight Tour, Late-July

Have You Heard?

Energy Audits are an Effective Solution to Saving Money

As energy and input prices continue to rise, everyone is looking for a way to cut costs. One solution that has become increasingly popular is "energy audits." An energy audit will evaluate your **home** or **farm** and suggest ways to reduce your energy inputs. Some of you may be asking how complicated it is to get an audit and implement it. **Well the answer is that it's easy!** A normal farm energy audit consists of an initial phone call from the auditor to learn about your operation and then a 1-2 hour farm visit to evaluate your current system. After that, you will receive a report recommending what you can do to **reduce your energy consumption and save you money.** The costs of audits vary widely and are based on the square foot, but a basic professional farm audit costs about \$1000-\$2000, and around \$400 for a basic home audit. This may seem expensive now, but with your energy savings it will more than pay for itself!

Some simple changes suggested could include:

- Replacing incandescent lights with LED → Replacing a 60W incandescent with an LED can save you up to 80%!
- Replace inadequate insulation and seal doors and windows to reduce heat loss.
- Clean ventilation fans on livestock facilities to reduce wear on the motor.

Some suggested management changes include:

- Reducing tillage → This will decrease fuel inputs and equipment wear among other things.
- Irrigation Management → Only apply water when needed and check your system for

damage. Consistent scheduling can reduce energy consumption by up to 30%!

This may all seem a little overwhelming, but there are some great resources to tell you whether an energy audit is right for you or simply give you ideas on how to cut your bottom line. You may be surprised at the results!

LEARN MORE:

- **USDA-NRCS Energy Tools:**
www.tinyurl.com/NRCS-Energy-Tools
- **US Department of Energy (includes information on potential rebates and financial incentives!):**
www.energysavers.gov
- **Agricultural Marketing Resource Center:**
www.tinyurl.com/AGMRC-energy-audits
- **Innovation Center for US Dairy:**
www.tinyurl.com/Dairy-Energy



Sources:

North Dakota State University Extension Service (2008). *Farmstead Energy Audit* (NDSU Publication AE-1366). Fargo, ND: NDSU Press.
Agricultural Marketing Research Center (2011). *Energy Audits for Farms and Ranches*. Retrieved from www.tinyurl.com/AGMRC-energy-audits.
US Department of Energy (2012). *How Energy-Efficient Light Bulbs Compare with Traditional Incandescents*. Retrieved from: www.energysavers.gov.



Do YOU Have What it Takes to Become a Backyard Conservationist?

In recent editions of the “Conservation Kaleidoscope,” we have discussed different conservation practices for larger landowners, such as cover crops, different tillage techniques and/or nutrient management. While all of these things help reduce soil erosion and improve water quality on large amounts of land, we realize that some of our readers may only have a house and yard, leaving you wondering what you can do to help promote soil and water conservation on this scale.

Well you are in luck, because this article is geared toward those wanting to be a “Backyard Conservationist.” I will focus on merely three of the many practices that can help any home reduce waste and pollution, as well as to improve water quality for the community.

Rain Barrels ... or Recycling and “Harvesting” Rain Water



Image Source: Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts’ website at www.iaswcd.org

Installing rain barrels is a backyard conservation practice that just about any home owner can accomplish. The idea behind rain barrels is rather simple and has been around for many, many years. The basic concept is to simply place a barrel beneath your downspout to collect the rain water from your roof. Just 1/4 of an inch of rainfall can yield up to 150 gallons of water from a

1000 square foot rooftop—enough to fill three rain barrels!

This water can then be stored and used later for anything from washing your car to watering your garden or lawn. By storing the water that would normally run off of your roof, across your yard and directly into a nearby storm drain, ditch, or other waterway—potentially carrying sediment and pollutants with it— the water can be slowly be “harvested” when you need it and will be able to soak back into the ground. If 1/4 of the roughly 114,000 housing units in St. Joseph County filled two 55-gallon rain barrels with rain water once, there would be over 3.1 million gallons of water kept from entering the local drainage system. Imagine if that were multiplied across the entire County! *Could storing some of the water in rain barrels have helped relieve some of the flooding issues seen in other states downstream during the spring of 2011?*

Rain Gardens ... or Designing Landscape to Make Difference

Rain Gardens are another means of utilizing rain water runoff from your roof and yard. Rain gardens are relatively easy to construct, and can be built on small or large lots. Rain Gar-

dens are depressions created in your yard that have been planted to native species that naturally grow well in wet soils. Rain runoff is directed, via a downspout or other means, towards the depression, which retains the water. By holding the rain water in the depression,



Notre Dame Students Installing Rain Garden.
Image Source: CARDNO JFNew’s website at www.cardnojfnew.com

it can slowly soak into the ground over a long period of time. With roots that reach deeper into the soil, native plants also help soak up some of the water, but they also break down pollutants that were carried by the runoff. Another benefit of a well designed rain garden is that it adds value to your property via landscaping.

Nutrient Management ... Or Why Soil Testing is Vital in Maintain a Healthy Lawn or Garden

Have you, or your lawn care provider, ever added fertilizer to your lawn? How did you know your grass needed that fertilizer? How did you know how much fertilizer you needed to apply to your lawn? Did you get a soil test done, or did you use the “a little is good so a lot is better” philosophy? A simple soil test is one of the most effective ways a person can accurately and dependably tell if fertilizer actually needs to be applied to your soil, no matter if it is a farm field or your backyard. Many times, without a soil test people will apply too much fertilizer, which during the next rain fall will wash down the storm drain, along with the money you paid for the fertilizer. Nutrients such as Nitrogen and Phosphorus, from both lawn care and agricultural fertilizers, are responsible for algae blooms not only in local lakes and ponds, but also in Lake Erie and the Gulf of Mexico. These algae blooms can create toxins that cause affected lakes to be closed to recreational activities, or dead zones in which there is not enough oxygen in the water for fish and other aquatic life to live.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE & OTHER PRACTICES:

- Call the SWCD office at 574-291-7444 ext. 3 or visit our website at www.stjosephswcd.org and click on “Services” and then “Backyard Conservation”
- A great series of tip sheets is available on the USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Services Website at www.nrcs.usda.gov (Use the search box, and type in *Backyard Conservation*)
- On May 4th, attend IUSB Center for a Sustainable Future’s 2nd Annual Michiana Original Art Rain Barrel Auction (see pg. 1 and www.iusb.edu/csfuture/rainbarrelauction for more details)



Spruce Up Your Yard for the Wild Ones

We all enjoy seeing wildlife in our yards—whether it is little tweety birds or a graceful deer—and the great thing is that no matter what size yard you have, you can improve it to encourage wildlife. Improving your yard boils down to four basic needs. **FOOD, WATER, SHELTER** and **PLACES TO RAISE YOUNG**.

FOOD

Think *native*, think *small* and think *nuts and berries*. Native plants and native animals go hand-in-hand, so the more native species of plants you add to your yard the better for the local wildlife. Also natives attract more insects, which in turn attract birds, amphibians and small mammals. These in turn will attract larger critters from hawks and owls to foxes. Any yard will benefit from food supplements, bird seed, suet cakes, nectar and fruit. The more variety of supplements and types of feeders you use, the more wildlife you will attract. Note – leave dead flowers and garden plants standing until spring, they will be used by wildlife all winter.

WATER

From bird baths to ponds to upside down garbage can lids, any way you provide water will help. Circulating the water will help attract more wildlife and if you can install a fountain, that would be even better. Keeping water available year round can really benefit the local wildlife.

SHELTER

Hiding places, planting evergreens, building a brush pile, planting ground cover and native warm season grasses... by adding shelter you will be amazed at the increase of wildlife that uses your yard.

PLACES TO RAISE YOUNG

Both natural and artificial nesting sites will benefit wildlife. Many of your shelter areas will be used for raising young as well as shelter. Remember that not all wildlife use the same size birdhouse, so try to provide as many styles and sizes that you can. And don't be upset when the squirrels and mice move in, they just provide more food for the bigger critters and entertainment for you.

WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY NATIVE PLANTS

Trees: Evergreens—Eastern Red Cedar, Hemlock and White Pine

Deciduous—Hackberry, Tulip Poplar, Hickory, Oaks, Redbud, Black Gum and Walnut

Shrubs: Serviceberry, New Jersey Tea, Spicebush, Ninebark, Sumac, Elderberry, Dogwood, Winterberry, Holly, Coralberries, Viburnums.

Vines: Virginia Creeper, Trumpet Creeper and Woolly Dutchman's Pipe.

OTHER PLANTS FOR YOUR WILDLIFE FRIENDS

Nectar Plants: Redbud, Lilac, Dogwood, Catmint, Bee balm, Phlox, Butterfly bush, Purple coneflower, Golden rod, & Asters

For Hummingbirds: Columbine, scarlet bergamot, salvia, cardinal lobeia, trumpet vine

LEARN MORE

- Indiana Department of Natural Resources, www.wildlife.in.gov
- Indiana Wildlife Federation, www.indianawildlife.org
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (2001). Fish & Wildlife Response to Farm Bill Conservation Practices. Retrieved from: www.tinyurl.com/wildlife-farmbill



The Clay Township Regional Waste District's wastewater treatment plant is an Indiana Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Friendly Habitat.
Image Source: www.indianawildlife.org



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 Keith Lineback
 William Millar



Our Story in Pictures

On April 4, 2012, we were pleased to hold our first Cover Crop Field Day, featuring our cover crop test plot. At the 2012 IASWCD Annual Conference, NRCS Chief Dave White made the powerful statement that “Indiana is leading the way for the nation in the whole soil health arena... We have more cover crops in Indiana than the rest of the country, combined.”

In St. Joe County, we have been working hard to promote the use of cover crops, and we feel that our Cover Crop Field Day was another important step toward this goal. To our 31 attendees, including staff members Marianne Black and Duane Arndt with Congressman Joe Donnelly’s office, we hope you enjoyed learning about the benefits of cover crops, while learning about their role in managing for soil health. Ultimately, healthy soils benefit water quality for St. Joseph County and communities living downstream.

THANK YOU to our 2012 Education and Outreach Sponsors for making another successful project possible! - PLEASE VISIT www.tinyurl.com/swcd-sponsors

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Doug Hovermale, District Director
 Abby Curtis, Acting CED
 Linda Bentele

**OUR
 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.