

MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** - On Tuesday March 15, 2022, at 8:00 pm a regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the St Joseph County SWCD at the North Liberty Public Library, 105 E. Market St., North Liberty, IN 46554, was called to order by John Dooms, Chairman.

PRESENT – SWCD

John Dooms, Chair/Supervisor
Chris Matthys, Supervisor
Marty Lappin, Supervisor

PRESENT – SWCD/NRCS

Sarah Longenecker, SWCD CC
Ally Pudlo, SWCD EEC
Debbie Knepp, NRCS DC
Kelly Dodd, Admin Assit / Treasurer

Present - EX-OFFICIO

PRESENT –

ABSENT – SWCD

Sam James, Supervisor
Dave Craft
Chuck Lehman
Randy Matthys
Richard Schmidt
Dru Wrasse
Dave Vandewalle, Supervisor

- II. **ADDITIONS TO AGENDA** – Ally – Science Alive Program. (10 – 4) Saturday May 21st. Has the hours mostly covered

III. **REGULAR BUSINESS**

- a. **Legislative Updates** – None
- b. **Indiana Conservation Partnership Updates** – It was mentioned that IASWCD needs an Assistant Regional Director. Let staff know if you want more info.
- c. **Minutes February 15, 2022 board meeting** – Board Minutes were reviewed and approved as presented.
- d. **Treasurer’s Report: (2-15-2022 – 3-15-22)** – Treasurer’s report was reviewed and approved as presented
- e. **Approval of Claims (2-15-2022 – 3-15-22)** – A motion (Matthys/Lappin) was made to approve Claim Nos. 11709 - 11716 for a total of \$1,226.40 Motion carried.

IV. **OLD BUSINESS**

- a. **St. Joseph Co. Soil & Water Conservation Partnership Staff Reports**
 - i. **Field Office Report** – Knepp answered questions regarding Annies Project and the field office report was presented to the board, reviewed & discussed. (Attached)
 - ii. **NRCS Talking Points** – Knepp presented the report to the board, reviewed & discussed (attached).
- b. **Committee Reports**
 - i. **CWI** – Sarah asked for release of \$750 for a completed pollinator Habitat contract. Chris made a motion to release funds, Marty 2nd the motion – Approved & Accepted. Updated report presented and attached.
- c. **Civil Rights Review** – Partner Checklist (attached)
- d. **Election of Officers** – Moved to New Business
- e. **Construction Stormwater General Permit** – Sarah discussed what the new permit is and how it works – Extra income / continues to build partnerships board approved continuing to review plans as we have.

V. **NEW BUSINESS**

- a. **Schedules/ Upcoming Events / Any Related Claims** –
 - i. **Staff Comp Time Requests** – Ally – April 23rd, “G.A.L.S”- April 30th, Sarah – March 16th & April 10th Pollinator Habitat.
- b. **Admin. Assistant Introduction** – The board acknowledged Kelly Dodd and was introduced to the board.
- c. **Ag Days 2022** – John mentioned that we try to staff the whole weekend. Marty and Chris said they would be available over the weekend, and John will do whatever it takes. Ally will fill out schedule. John mentioned that they will need to revisit whether they will staff the whole weekend next year. (Friday only).
- d. **Election of Officers** – Chairman - John Dooms, Vice Chair – Dave Vandewalle (1st vote ended in 3 way tie), Treasurer – Kelly Dodd. Motion approved and closed.

- VI. **PRIVILEGE OF FLOOR** – John reminded everyone that he is the voice of the Board, but needs all 5 opinions to make a better decision. John led a discussion regarding the newsletter.

- VII. **ADJOURNMENT** – The board meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Dodd

Administrative Assistant

St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District

2903 Gary Drive, Plymouth, IN 46563

www.stjosephswcd.org

Approved by:



Supervisor



Supervisor



Supervisor

Field Office Report
February 14 – March 11, 2022

General/Miscellaneous
Office Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administrative Assistant Interviews• Complete documents for New Hire (SWCD employee access to phones, email, computer, etc)• NRCS supervisor office visit• Prepare compliance status review list (wetlands/HEL)• Prepare office spot for Pheasant's Forever Farm Bill Biologist
Field Work

EQIP- Environmental Quality Incentive Program
Office Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete assessments/rankings for 11 applications• 1 funded application – prepare pre-approval documents (High Tunnel)• Complete modification and contract packet to transfer contract to new owner• 1 Pollinator habitat completed (complete seed mix check, payment documents)
Field Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete field visit for 3 applicants (inventory of natural resources)• Complete field visit to verify pollinator habitat planting

WRE- Wetland Reserve Program
Office Work
Start monitoring activities – landowner contacts and offsite portion
Field Work
Site visit to 2 projects to finish restoration payment

CSP- Conservation Stewardship Program
Office Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•
Field Work

CRP-Conservation Reserve Program
Office Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed a Needed and Feasible request for FSA (filter strips and prairie strips)• Completed 2 re-enroll worksheets for FSA (filter strip, grassed waterway)• Prepare status review list
Field Work

CWI- Clean Water Indiana
Office Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Made substitutions for seed mix due to supply issues• Finalized conservation planning for pollinator habitat planting• Processed completion form and docs for completed pollinator planting
Field Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•

Wetland Determinations / Highly Erodible Land Determinations	
Office Work	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed 3 wetland determination Completed 3 HEL determinations 	
Field Work	

Rule 5/ Rule 13	
Office/Field Work	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	

Education		
Age	Total # Programs/ Hours	Total # People
Youth Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Backyard Conservation with Birds and Pollinators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 adults, 14 children
Adult Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annie's Project Soils 101 at North Liberty Library Watersheds 101 at North Liberty Library Composting 101 at North Liberty Library Indiana Wildlife and Habitats at North Liberty Library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 adults 0, postponed due to weather 2 adults 2 adults 2 adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reached out to schools with Outdoor Labs Scheduled programs for spring 		

Meetings & Trainings	
Staff Meeting - 3 Program/Technology Update – 3 Urban Planning Training NRCS/FSA Joint CRP meeting NRCS/DNR Joint meeting Social Media Training RCPP proposal meeting NE Area Soil Health Team Meeting	CISMA Urban Update CRP and Compliance Tools Extension Training on Herbicide shortage and price (2 – ½ day sessions) Small Farm Conference (multiple days and sessions) Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy - 2
Webinars	Dates
Climate Smart Conservation Soil Health High Tunnels	February 21 – Office Closed

Comments from the Community

DC Talking Points

April 2022

CLIMATE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS GRANTS

USDA's Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities will provide grants for pilot projects that create market opportunities for U.S. agricultural and forest products produced using climate-smart practices and include innovative, cost-effective methods for quantification, monitoring and verification of greenhouse gas and carbon sequestration benefits.

Pilot projects must focus on the on-farm, on-ranch or forest production of climate-smart commodities and associated reductions of greenhouse gas emissions and/or carbon sequestration. Highly competitive projects will include agricultural and forestry practices or combinations of practices, and/or practice enhancements that provide greenhouse gas benefits and/or carbon sequestration.

First funding pool applications due April 8: These proposals are from \$5 million to \$100 million and should include large-scale pilot projects that emphasize the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production and include direct, meaningful benefits to a representative cross-section of production agriculture, including small and/or historically underserved producers.

Second funding pool applications due May 27: These proposals are from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999 and are limited to particularly innovative pilot projects. These projects should place an emphasis on:

- Enrollment of small and/or underserved producers, and/or
- Monitoring, reporting and verification activities developed at minority-serving institutions.

For more information and resources to support your application, visit [Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities | USDA](#).

CONSERVATION EFFECTS ASSESSMENT PROJECT (CEAP) REPORT

The "[Conservation Practices on Cultivated Cropland: A Comparison of CEAP I and CEAP II Survey Data and Modeling](#)" was developed by USDA's Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). It found significant gains for soil health and soil carbon storage, while also identifying areas where additional and targeted nutrient management strategies are needed.

Key findings include:

- Farmers increasingly adopted advanced technology, including enhanced-efficiency fertilizers and variable rate fertilization to improve efficiency, assist agricultural economies and benefit the environment.
- More efficient conservation tillage systems, particularly no-till, became the dominant form of tillage, improving soil health and reducing fuel use.
- Use of structural practices increased, largely in combination with conservation tillage as farmers increasingly integrated conservation treatments to gain efficiencies. Structural practices include terraces, filter and buffer strips, grassed waterways and field borders.
- Irrigation expanded in more humid areas, and as irrigators shifted to more efficient systems and improved water management strategies, per-acre water application rates decreased by 19% and withdrawals by 7 million-acre-feet.
- Nearly 70% of cultivated cropland had conservation crop rotations, and 28% had high-biomass conservation crop rotations.

Because of this increased conservation, the report estimates:

- Average annual water (sheet and rill) and wind erosion dropped by 70 million and 94 million tons, respectively, and edge-of-field sediment loss declined by 74 million tons.
- Nearly 26 million additional acres of cultivated cropland were gaining soil carbon, and carbon gains on all cultivated cropland increased by over 8.8 million tons per year.
- Nitrogen and phosphorus losses through surface runoff declined by 3% and 6%, respectively.
- Average annual fuel use dropped by 110 million gallons of diesel fuel equivalents, avoiding associated greenhouse gas emissions of nearly 1.2 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalents.

The report also revealed that cropping patterns have changed over the years in response to climate, policy, trade, renewable energy and prices, presenting a nutrient management challenge. Improving the timing and application method of nutrients can allow production demands to be met while reducing the impacts of crop production on the environment. NRCS plans to continue its focus on nutrient management conservation practices and strategies with vigorous outreach efforts to farmers and further engagement with partner groups to adjust to these changing trends.

Download the [full report](#) or a [four-page summary of findings](#). For more information on CEAP, [visit the CEAP webpage](#) or [view this multimedia story](#).

INDIANA SCIENCE ASSESSMENT

The Indiana Science Assessment has completed a year one progress report, available at <https://www.in.gov/isda/files/Indiana-Science-Assessment-Year-1-Progress-Report.pdf>. The Indiana Science Assessment is determining water quality loads and trends within each basin of the state and improving the Indiana Conservation Partnership's method of quantifying nutrient and sediment reductions from conservation practices.

RETURN TO WORKPLACE

While we continue to monitor the status of the pandemic, it is our intent to also continue our phased return to the physical workspace. There are three key components to this next phase:

- On February 28, we welcomed the senior leadership cadre back to physical office spaces. This included political appointees, senior executive service, senior level, scientific and professional, senior scientific and technological service and senior foreign service officers.
- FPAC will notify employees of the upcoming phased return dates for FSA, NRCS and RMA. Currently it is anticipated to be in mid-April or early May.

GOVDELIVERY FIELD OFFICE ADMINISTRATORS

General NRCS articles can be found on SharePoint here: [Public Affairs - GovDelivery - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#).

Clean Water Indiana Grant

3/15/2021

Need payment approval/release:

1 acre of pollinator habitat at \$750.00

Clean Water Indiana 2021-2023

Total Paid out 1-1-2021 to present:

St Joseph County	\$0.00
Marshall County	\$1380.78
Total	\$1380.78
Grant Total	\$65,000.00
Remaining Amount	\$63,619.22

Civil Rights Responsibilities for Partners Checklist

• Secretary of Agriculture Civil Rights Policy Statement	• USDA Equal Employment Opportunity is the Law poster
• USDA Alternative Dispute Resolution Policy Statement	• NRCS Chief's Civil Rights Policy Statement
• USDA Anti-Harassment Policy Statement	• NRCS EEO Counseling poster
• USDA Nondiscrimination Statement	• NRCS LEP Policy Statement
• "And Justice for All" poster	• NRCS LEP Services poster
• USDA "Sexual Harassment is Illegal" poster	• [RESERVED]

- The public notification requirements must be prominently and visibly displayed in all offices where there is a USDA presence and where viewing is accessible for employees and customers.
- Compliance with Section 504¹ and Section 508² of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- Access public notification required documents at the following link:
http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/about/civilrights/?cid=nrcs143_022466
- Public notification documents attached: (Review description for partners)

1. Secretary of Agriculture Civil Rights Policy Statement- affirms USDA's commitment to equality and civil rights for program delivery and employment with emphasize on USDA's zero tolerance for any form of discrimination or reprisal.
2. USDA Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Policy Statement- affirms USDA's commitment to conflict prevention to increase customer satisfaction and employee morale.
3. USDA Anti-Harassment Policy Statement- affirms USDA's commitment to maintaining an environment free from unlawful harassment (sexual and non-sexual).
4. USDA Nondiscrimination Statement - must be posted in all USDA offices and included on all materials produced by USDA for public information, public education, or public distribution. In addition to Section 504 and Section 508 requirements, the statement shall be made available in other languages appropriate to the local population served or directly affected by USDA program or activity.
5. "And Justice for All" poster - primary method utilized to inform customers or their civil rights. Institutions participating or administering USDA programs are required to display the appropriate poster in respective facilities where poster can be viewed by customers. (NRCS applicable versions: Form AD-475-A, relevant to assisted programs; and Form AD-475-C, relevant to conducted programs.)
6. USDA "Sexual Harassment is Illegal" poster - general preventive tips and guidance on filing sexual harassment claims.
7. USDA "EEO Is The Law" poster- employee information and guidance on filing an EEO complaint.
8. NRCS Chiefs Civil Rights Policy Statement- reaffirms Secretary of Agriculture's Civil Rights policy and emphasizes that reprisal of any kind against customers or employees will not be tolerated.
9. NRCS "EEO Counseling" poster - contact information for employees filing an EEO complaint. (does not apply to customers)

¹ Federal facilities and locations must be accessible for the public to guarantee access to persons with a disability.

² Public and employee notices regarding events and activities sponsored, co-sponsored, hosted, and or co-hosted by USDA, NRCS contain NRCS POC information including name, telephone number, email address, and a respond by date for persons to request accommodations (for example - an interpreter, translator, seating arrangements, etc.) materials in an alternative format (for example - braille, large prints, audiotape - captioning, etc.)

Civil Rights Responsibilities for Partners Checklist

NRCS is required to deliver USDA Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity requirements and information with institutions that participate in or administer USDA federally conducted and/or federally assisted programs. In an effort to fully comply with Federal, Departmental, and Agency governing Civil Rights laws and regulations, this check-list serves as an internal guide to assist with the Civil Rights responsibilities and expectation discussion between NRCS and Partners.

— **Board Membership Responsibilities**

- Annual review of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NRCS and Board.
- SWCD Board Demographic Information - NRCS Plan of Action for Representation on Boards, Councils, and Committees, requires States to annually review current Board membership data with state conservation agencies and discuss the opportunities and benefits of having minority and female representatives on local boards/councils who are impacted by the board's/council's decisions regarding conservation programs.
- Prohibition disclosure of certain information by the USDA and its Cooperators - Applicants, participants, location, and any and all privacy information is not to be disclosed without a FOIA request. Upon Board membership ending, former Board members have the responsibility to protect any information.
- New and existing partners are invited and should attend NRCS sponsored Civil Rights Training.

— **Federally Assisted and Federally Conducted Program Delivery Responsibilities**

- 1964 Civil Rights Act - Title VI is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. Unlawful/prohibited discrimination is unfair or unequal treatment based on a prohibited bases.
- NRCS employees and partners who work with USDA programs are required to guarantee fairness and equal treatment to all customers eligible to receive USDA/NRCS programs and services regardless of any of the cited prohibited bases enforced by USDA:
race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

— **Program Outreach**

- NRCS State and Field offices are required to establish and maintain outreach programs at the local level to ensure that all persons know about the availability of USDA/NRCS program services and participate.

— **Public Notification Responsibilities**

- Governing documents relative to required equal opportunity public notification requirements that conservation partners must review:

USDA NRCS is an Equal Opportunity Employer, Provider, and Lender

Civil Rights Responsibilities for Partners Checklist

10. NRCS Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Policy Statement - reaffirms USDA's commitment and provides support to the provisions of federally conducted and federally assisted prohibited discrimination based on national origin. LEP applies to individuals who do not speak English as their primary language, and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

11. NRCS LEP Services poster - provides notice to customers that LEP oral interpreting and written translation services are available at no cost to customer relative to NRCS federally assisted and federally conducted programs.

Affirmation of Review:

Field Office/State _____

SWCD Board _____

Board Chairperson- Printed Name:

Signature and Date:

1. _____

NRCS Rep - Printed Name and Title:

Signature and Date:

1. _____
