

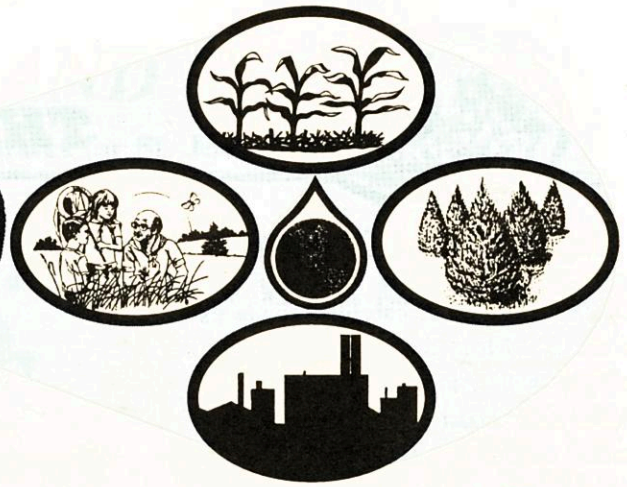


**St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District**

CONSERVATION



KALEIDOSCOPE



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

Jul/Aug/Sep/ 2000
Volume 2, Issue 3

5605 U.S. 31 South, Suite 4 *South Bend, IN *
Website: www.iaswcd.org/stjoseph

Telephone (219) 291-2300 Ext. 3
Fax (219) 291-0284

Editor: Jerod Chew
Tonia Albright

Calendar of Events

- July 4
Independence Day
Office Closed
- July 17
SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 – Farm Bureau Mtg. Room
- July 31 – August 5
St. Joseph Co. 4-H Fair
- August 10
Nutrient & Waste Management
Seminar
- August 21
SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 – Farm Bureau Mtg. Room
- September 4
Labor Day – Office Closed
- September 18
SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 – Farm Bureau Mtg. Room
- September 23
Forestry Field Day
- September 28 & 29
Riverwatch Training



WILDFLOWER SEED



The St. Joseph County SWCD Office has Wildflower Seed available to purchase throughout the year. If interested, please call.



Please note a change in our address:
St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District Office
5605 U.S. 31 South, Suite 4
South Bend, IN 46614

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Due to rising costs, we find it necessary to downsize our mailings. If you are receiving duplicate newsletters, or wish to be taken off of the mailing list, please call the office at 219-291-2300 ext. 3. Your help in this matter is greatly appreciated.

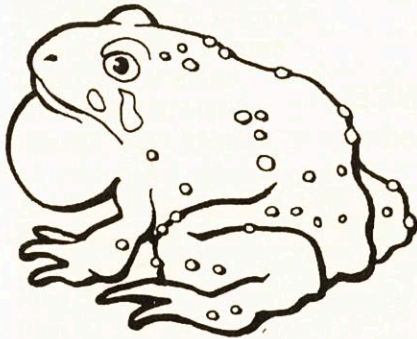


THE NATURAL EDUCATOR

INVITE A TOAD TO DINNER

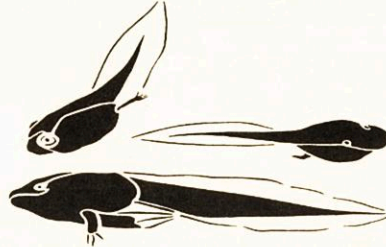
Do you remember catching toads as a child? Most likely the toad you caught was *Bufo Americanus*, the American Toad. It is one of the most common amphibians found throughout the United States. American toads breed in ponds and wetlands in the spring and lay strings of eggs in the water. After hatching, the newborns spend a few weeks as tadpoles, then emerge from the water as adorable baby toads. Adult toads spend most of their life away from water, and are most active at dusk and on drizzly days. Take a walk at dusk to do a toad inventory — you might be surprised to find that toads already reside in your backyard.

Why should we care about toads? While they may look unworthy of attention, toads will stalk and eat unwanted garden and lawn pest. Their tongues dart out to catch



flying insects faster than our eyes can follow. One of their favorite meals is the cutworm — that nasty garden demolition expert. Toads also can add a beautiful song to your world. Did you know that all toads and frogs have a different song to communicate within their species. On a warm spring night you can hear the long monotone trill of the male as he calls for a mate.

Ponds and natural wet spots will attract toads. If you do not have a



natural wet spot, create one with a pie plate or clay pot. Be sure to place it in a shady spot. Toads seek dim, moist spots during the day. Something as simple as a broken clay pot, turned upside down makes a nice toad home. Piles of bricks, sticks or bark can also be used. Creating small ponds or wetlands in your yard will not only help toads but other amphibians as well.

If you want to give toads an advantage, reevaluate the chemical fertilizers and herbicides that you use. Some amphibian deformities have been traced to overexposure to certain chemicals. In general, amphibians are having a hard time surviving because of habitat degradation and loss.

Just a note, toads will not and can not give you warts. Those large glands behind the toad's eye, do secrete a toxin — they are the toad's best defense against predators, such as cats and dogs. The toxin irritates the mouths of would be diners.

By attracting amphibians, you are giving something back and helping to maintain a natural balance in your yard. For more information on wildlife habitat, ponds, wetlands and other Backyard Conservation practices, visit the Natural Resource Conservation Service online at: www.nrcs.usda.gov

ATTRACTING BUTTERFLIES TO YOUR BACKYARD HABITAT

Now is the time to plant flowers that will not only liven up your yard but also attract brightly colored butterflies. While any flower is good, some are better for attracting these beautiful insects to your yard. Some excellent plants are:

Yarrow, Cosmos, Sedum, Phlox, Golden alyssum, Butterfly bush, Butterfly weed, Aster, Native Goldenrod, Lilac, Thyme, Hyssop, Dogbanes, and Meadowsweet.



SOMETHING FUN TO TRY THIS SUMMER

Another rather easy visitor that you can attract to your yard are Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Most stores with garden supplies sell inexpensive feeders. Nectar can be made cheaply by combining 4 cups water and one cup sugar. Keep the feeder clean and filled and then enjoy the show.

But if you want a more personal experience, once the birds are regulars to your yard, paint your nose red with lipstick, then stand very still next to the feeder. With luck, you will have a hummingbird closer than you ever imagined.



WOODLAND TIMES

Forestry News Updates for St. Joseph County

2000 Forestry Field Day

This year's Forestry Field Day will be held in Marshall County on September 23rd. If you've never been to one of the annual field days then you should plan on it this year. The field days are held by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of St. Joseph, Elkhart, Kosciusko, and Marshall Counties. The host county rotates each year.



Harvesting timber using a team of horses, 1999 Forestry Field Day.

The itinerary for past field days has included talks and demonstrations by professionals on subjects about forestry economics, forest improvement, attracting wildlife, pond management, and prairie establishment. The field day is open to anyone, so if you're interested please contact our office for details!

We're Looking for THE BIG TREES

Help find The Big Trees of St. Joseph County. Certificates are awarded to the owners and nominators of each champion tree. Every 2 to 3 years the printed listing of the county champion trees is updated, so we are always looking for bigger trees!



Requirements:

- must be a living tree growing within the county
- must be a native species for our county; no ornamentals

If you need help identifying your tree then you may bring in a twig with leaves to:

Bendix Woods County Park
219/654-3155

Rum Village Nature Center
219/235-9455

or our office 219/291-2300 ext. 3

To enter a tree you must complete a nomination form. You will need the tree species common name, scientific name if known, circumference at 4.5 feet, height, average crown spread, photo, and map to the site.

Your tree will be assigned a point value based on the measurements. It's possible that your tree may even qualify for state recognition. All county champions will be compared to the current state champion list.

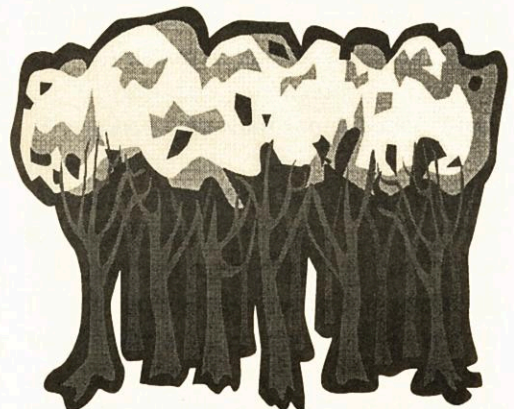
Please feel free to contact our office for questions or to receive a nomination form.

New Trees All Around!!!

This year as you travel around the Michiana region, you may have noticed that many properties have newly planted trees. Well, we here at the Soil and Water Conservation Partnership are proud to say that approximately 45,000 of those trees are from our 1999-2000 tree sales program.

This program has been a success because of the wonderful conservation attitudes of the citizens in this community and hard work by many volunteers. Our thanks go out to the Master Gardeners, Extension Service, Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, St. Joseph County 4-H Fairgrounds, Rum Village Nature Center, Bendix Woods County Park, Randy Mathys and Family, and John Glenn FFA.

Through our Tree Grant Program, we were able to donate trees to seven different projects for beautification, conservation, and educational purposes. This is just one of the many ways that 100% of the money raised from the tree sales program is given back to the community.





USDA NRCS

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Carbon Storage Could Lead to Benefits for Conservation & Agriculture

Carbon sequestration, the process of plants removing carbon dioxide from the air and storing it as carbon in the soil and plant material, could lead to advantages for utility companies, agriculture and the environment.

Scientists define global warming as a process where an increased level of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere will cause global climate changes. Many scientists believe global warming will lead to dramatic changes in weather patterns and cause polar ice caps to melt. These changes could hinder agriculture production and result in the flooding of coastal areas.

Fossil fuel combustion produces 98.5% of the most prevalent greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide levels have risen 30% since the industrial revolution. Plants remove some of this carbon dioxide from the atmosphere during photosynthesis and store the carbon in their plant tissues and in the soil.

Scientists found that an increase in plants and plant materials will decrease carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, a process that scientists refer to as "carbon sequestration". Studies identified agricultural conservation practices as a significant source of carbon sequestration. Conservation practices that sequester larger amounts of carbon include

FIELD NOTES



Conservation buffers sequester carbon in soil and vegetation.

cover crops, no-till and conservation buffers, tree or grass plantings and wetland restorations.

Recent concerns over green house gases led to calls for power companies, who emit large amounts of carbon dioxide, to reduce emissions worldwide. Most companies view these desired reductions in emissions technologically and financially impossible to accomplish at this time. For that reason agriculture's potential to reduce atmospheric carbon attracted their attention. Carbon credit trading provides an alternative that mitigates the effects of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Carbon credit trading would allow landowners using conservation practices to sell carbon credits to companies that exceed emission standards.

The potential benefits of carbon credit trading reach well beyond air quality. Increased use of conservation practices reduce soil erosion and filter agricultural chemicals and pathogens out of rainwater run-off. Reduction in these contaminants leads to cleaner water for drinking, wildlife, recreation, and aesthetics. Also, carbon credit trading provides additional commodities for farmers to produce and sell. Agricultural

businesses may begin designing new products, and improving old ones, to allow farmers to implement conservation practices more successfully.

To provide baseline carbon storage data to farmers and power companies, researchers must determine the amount of carbon stored by different conservation practices on different soils. Scientists developed a computer model called CENTURY to make these determinations. Each of Indiana's 92 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) recently started to gather information to start this process. Each soil and water conservation district held a rural appraisal meeting to gather this information. Local landowners and other residents provided information about pre-agriculture conditions and agricultural trends in their county. Scientists at Colorado State University Natural Resources Ecology Lab will use the information to



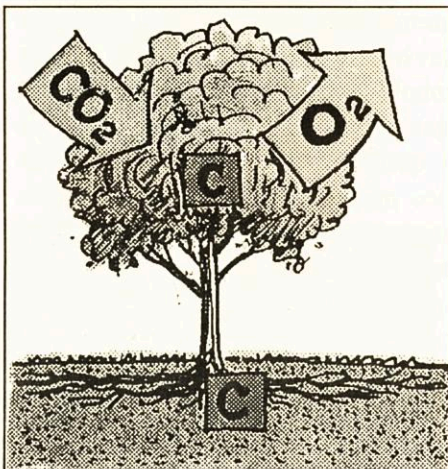
Crop rotations and reduced tillage improve soil quality and sequester soil organic carbon.



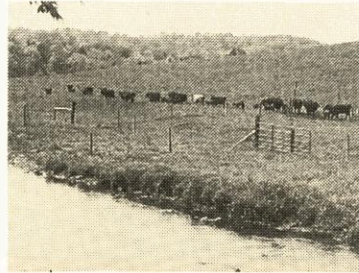
FIELD NOTES

determine the amount of carbon stored by conservation practices on Indiana's soil types.

Indiana is only the second state in the U.S. to determine the amount of carbon sequestered by different conservation practices on their soils. A great deal of additional work and study will take place before carbon credit trading becomes a widely used method to address increased levels of greenhouse gases and global warming. Many agencies and organizations provide funding, support, research and education for the project. The US Department of Energy provides the major funding for the project, with additional funding from the Cinergy Foundation. The National Association of Conservation Districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, along with the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and Purdue University provide program administration, support and education.



Improved grazing management can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration.



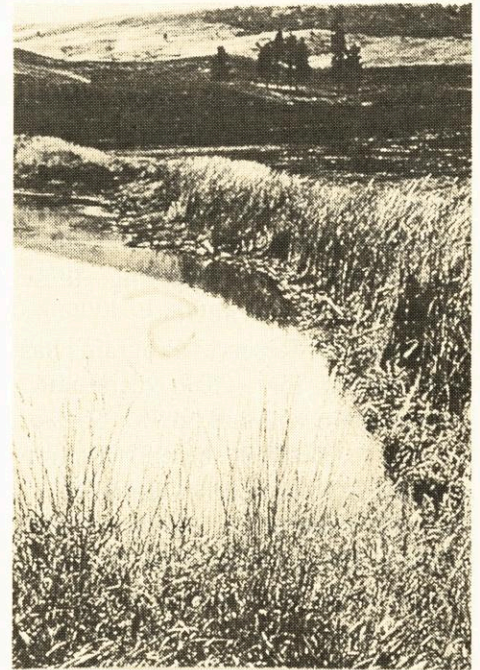
What are Farmers Saying About Filter Strips?

Filter Strips have become extremely popular for a number of reasons over the last year, primarily due to the increased exposure created by the Conservation Reserve Program. At first, producers are reluctant to even consider planting strips of grass along ditches or streams because they don't want to take ground out of crop production. But some farmers soon realize there are economic benefits to planting filter strips. Following are some of those comments:

- The 20' strip along the ditches is not the most productive ground because it is basically a spoil bank – subsoil with little fertility dug out of the ditch. In reality, my yields are not as high here.
- At the rate the ditch bank is sloughing into the field, I will lose 20' of my field in the next five years. It would be better to seed that 20' stretch to grass, stabilize the ditch bank and save my field.
- This private ditch needs to be cleaned every 7 – 8 years. A filter strip will help me slow the rate of sediment deposit in the ditch which will save me money.

- I have to pump out of this ditch to lower the water table to farm. Sediment in the ditch creates maintenance problems with the pump which is costly. Filter strips would help reduce that cost.

Filter Strip



Other positive comments we have heard about planting filter strips include:

- 1) They allow better access around the farm because they can be used as travel lanes.
- 2) Producers don't have to spray fertilizers and chemicals as close as they normally would to surface waters.
- 3) They provide natural weed control along the water's edge.
- 4) Filter Strips enhance the aesthetics of the farm.

Don't take our word for it. Talk to local farmers who have installed these



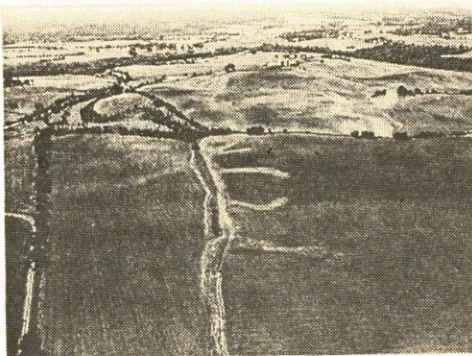
FIELD NOTES

practices. Find out what filter strips can do for you. In the end, you'll find filter strips can be a valuable asset to your farm.

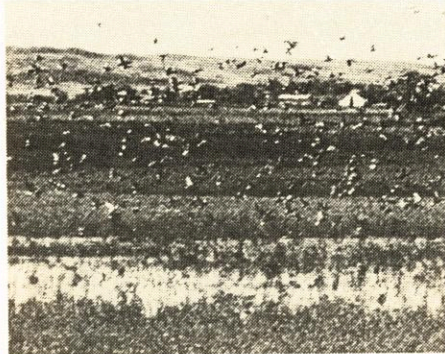
Something Good Got Even Better

Thinking about signing up for the continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)? Interested in planting a windbreak around your field or a filter strip along the ditch bank? Do you need a grassed waterway for the gully running across the field? The incentives have never been better for applying these conservation practices. The Conservation Reserve Program has been around for a few years now. This program will still pay for 50% of the cost to establish the conservation practices such as field windbreaks, grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, shallow water areas, contour strips, shelterbelts, living snow fences and crosswind trap strips. These practices also receive an annual payment based on the per acre soil rental rate established by the FSA County Committee.

Grass Waterways



Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife



In addition, the following enhancements have been added to the CRP:

A) An up-front CRP signing payment (CRP-SIP) of \$100.00 to \$150.00 per acre (depending on contract length) will be provided to eligible participants who enroll selected practices. These practices are filter strips, riparian buffers, grassed waterways, field windbreaks, shelter belts and living snow fences. This one time payment will be made after the contract is approved and all payment eligibility criteria are met.

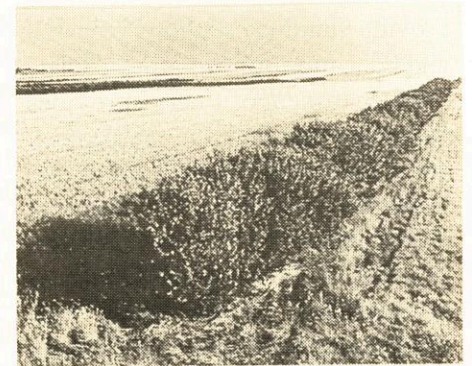
B) A new practice payment (PIP) equal to 40% of the eligible installation costs will be provided to eligible participants who enroll certain practices. These practices are filter strips, grassed waterways, field windbreaks, riparian buffers, contour grass strips, shallow water areas, shelter belts, living snow fences and crosswind trap strips. This one time payment will be issued after the practice is installed, eligible costs are verified and other payment eligibility criteria are met.

If you're interested in finding out more about the new CRP sign-up, stop by the office or call us at (219)291-2300, ext. 3.

Shelter Belts



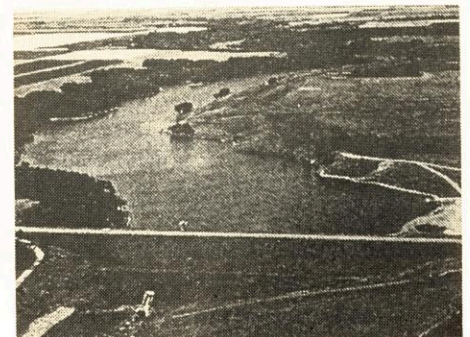
Field Windbreaks



Living Snow Fences



Riparian Buffers





URBAN MEANDERINGS

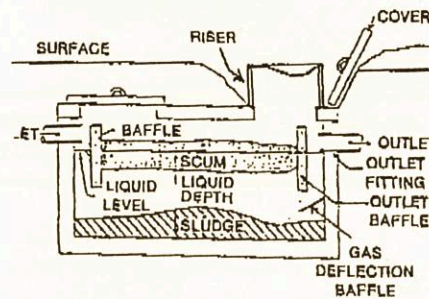
SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE BENEFITS EVERYONE

The sandy soils coupled with three decades of increasing urban population growth has increased the need for correct septic system maintenance by every home owner in the northeast corner of St. Joseph County. Lack of maintenance and understanding of septic system operation are major causes for failures and the result is both an inconvenience and a costly repair for the homeowner. In addition, the failing system is unable to adequately remove waste materials and can reduce the quality of surface and ground water available to the whole community. Proper maintenance of the family car extends its life and reliability significantly. The same principle is true with respect to the septic system. Every septic system needs to be maintained properly to protect the surface and ground water. Neglected septic system maintenance especially in the northeast corner of the county has the potential to negatively impact the quality of life significantly in those communities.

What measures can be taken to protect our water quality and to increase the life and efficiency of the private homeowner septic system? Understanding how your private sewage system operates is the first step in this process. The basic system consists of two parts: a water tight septic tank for receiving untreated household waste and a subsurface absorption field. The tank provides a place for heavy solids to settle out, decompose slowly and be converted into liquid form through bacterial action. This liquid from the septic tank is then distributed through a series of

perforated pipes surrounded by stone into the soil where renovation of the wastewater occurs.

SEPTIC TANK



One of the considerations in designing your on-site disposal system is the anticipated maximum water usage by your family. Practicing water conservation within your household is one important component in prolonging the life of the absorption field. For example: spreading laundry over the week instead of all on Saturday and trying to utilize full loads are ways to reduce peak waste water demands on your septic system.

Protection of the septic system from physical damage is important to extending it's life. The soil is the single most important critical factor in the treatment of your sewage. The soil on your home site was developed over several centuries and can be damaged in a matter of seconds. Soil compaction and the resultant loss of soil structure is the greatest potential problem of physical damage. For example: changing your driveway and relocating it over the absorption field or driving heavy trucks over the leach bed field during construction of an addition to your home. For the family in the process of building a new home, protection of the septic leach field is very important and prudent.

Your private on-site sewage system should never be out of sight and out of mind. Failure to maintain your septic system will normally always cause premature failure and the resulting repair will be very expensive. Many times people say "Oh, I haven't had to pump out my septic tank for sixteen years." The point is that when you have to pump it out it is too late and the absorption field has already been damaged. Preventive maintenance by pumping out accumulated solids every two or three years will increase the life of the leach field considerably. The addition of a garbage disposal will increase the amount of solids that enter your septic tank. These additional solids may require the installation a larger septic tank or annual pumping maintenance. The planting of trees and shrubs too close to the absorption field can cause damage to the system through roots growing into the tile distribution tubes.

Homeowners should not utilize their septic systems to dispose of grease, cloth, plastic, rubber, or other non-biodegradable household wastes. Commercially available septic tank additives are not necessary for the proper operation of a household septic system. The addition or use of ACID solvents is prohibited. The family considering the purchase of an existing home should check the maintenance record of the on-site sewage system thoroughly. Under no conditions may a water well of any kind, be located closer than 50 feet from any part of a septic system. Septic system maintenance performed over the life of the home is very important.

For more information please call the St. Joseph County Health Department at 219-235-9775 or our office.



**St. Joseph County Soil and Water
Conservation District**
60455 U.S. 31 South, Suite 4
South Bend, IN 46614

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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.**

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