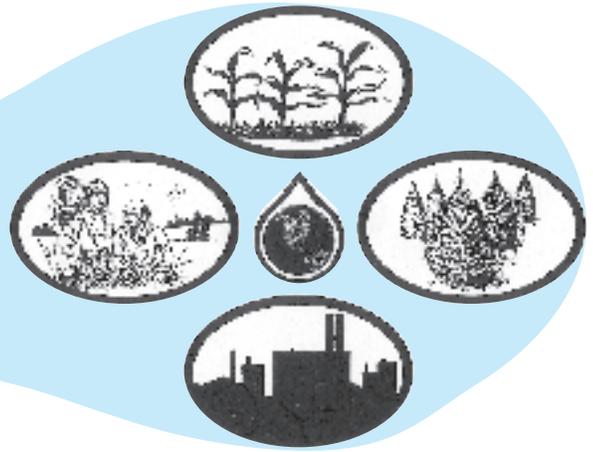




St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

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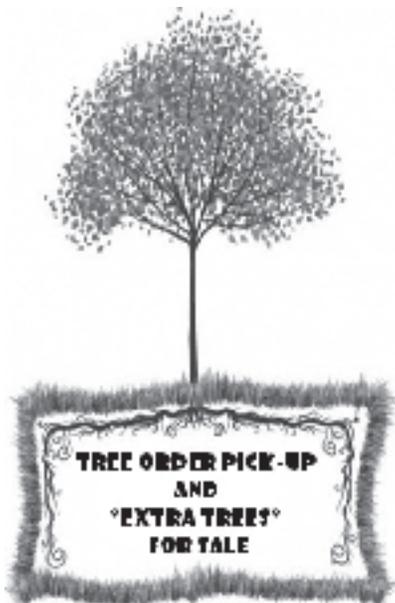
51st Annual Meeting Wrap-Up

The St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District held its Annual Meeting on January 28, 2011 at St. Hedwig Memorial Center in South Bend, IN. About 159 people throughout the community were in attendance. The meeting included a recognition of guests by John Dooms and Congressman Joe Donnelly provided additional opening remarks. In addition to enjoying St. Hedwig's signature family-style Polish Dinner, attendees participated in the annual election, once again selecting John Dooms for a three-year term as a St. Joseph County SWCD Supervisor. St. Joseph County Councilman, Mike Kruk, conducted Supervisor Dooms' Oath of Office.

Associate Supervisor, Dru Wrasse recognized the following award winners: *Tenure Awards for Board Members* (Chuck Lehman-30 Years; Richard Schmidt-25 Years; Jim LaFree-20 Years; Dave Craft-10 Years); *Conservation Farmer of the Year* - Mike Burkholder; *Conservation Educator of the Year* - Wendy Folk; *Wildlife Habitat & Forestry Development* - Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians; *Certificate of Recognition for Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation District's Award Recipient for the state-level "Friend of Conservation Award"* - Eugene Myers.

The Annual Financial Report was presented by Associate Supervisor, Jan Ivkovich. The inspirational and humorous entertainment for the evening was provided by Charlie Adams, former Sports Anchor and Positive News Reporter with Michiana's WSBT Channel 22.

Thank you to everyone involved in making our 51st Annual Meeting a success!



Thank you! to everyone who pre-ordered items from our **25th Annual Conservation Tree Sale** and our **Spring 2011 Rain Barrel & Composter Pre-Sale**. The pick-up date and location for your items is **Saturday, April 16th, 2011, from 8:00 am until noon (EST)** at the swine barn at the **St. Joseph County 4H Fairgrounds**.

If you missed the March 10th deadline for pre-ordering trees, you still have a chance to purchase some ... we will have **EXTRA TREES** for sale at the same time and location as the pre-order pick-up.

See you at the fairgrounds on April 16th!



PHOTO: Congressman Joe Donnelly (standing) chats with St. Joseph County SWCD Supervisors, Carole Riewe (far right) and John Kulwicki (left, sitting)

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Come on Down to an Eco-Art Event Featuring 12 Artists and an Original Art Rain Barrel Auction on Friday, May 6th

Mark your calendar for Friday, May 6th (beginning at 7PM at the South Bend Museum of Art located inside the Century Center) for an exciting new community eco-art event where you can learn about rain barrels, watch or even bid at an **Original Art Rain Barrel Auction**, and even sign up to win a free rain barrel.

The St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District is a proud sponsor of this Original Art Rain Barrel Project, which is being conducted by Kathleen Petitjean, Pediatric Occupational Therapist with Special Needs and Abilities Preschool (SNAP) and a Fellow with IU South Bend's Center for a Sustainable Future. Twelve area artist and artist groups, including students and buddies from SNAP, have been busily painting 55-gallon plastic containers converted for use as rain barrels. Numerous local businesses and organizations are underwriting this project to offset expenses such as the materials needed to assemble the rain barrels, paints for the artists to use, and clear-coating to preserve the artwork.

The goal of Kathleen's project is to raise awareness of water as a natural resource and demonstrate how homeowners, by capturing water in a rain barrel, can save money while protecting the St. Joseph River and the area of land that drains into our local lakes, wetlands, rivers, streams, ditches, and other bodies of water. Rain barrels are designed to collect and re-use rainwater

and snowmelt from roofs to then be used for such things as watering your garden or washing your car.

The rain barrels painted for this project have been on display throughout the community and at sponsoring businesses, and will be on display the South Bend Museum of Art for the two weeks prior to the May 6th Auction.

The proceeds will be evenly divided up between the artists and IUSB's Center for a Sustainable Future.

To help get the word out about the May 6th Rain Barrel Auction, we have been sending out regular email updates featuring photos and artists statements from the twelve artists and artists groups whose Rain Barrels will be auctioned off. For those of you who are not yet on our email list, we wanted to bring you up to speed below. Due to limited space, we have only included excerpts of the artist statements, but for anyone who'd like to "get the whole story", check out the shortcut www.tinyurl.com/rainbarrelauction which takes you to a page on our website that provides a slideshow with each statement in its entirety. For anyone who'd prefer to see the statements in print, or who would like to subscribe to our newsletter by email, just give our office a call and we'd be happy to send you this information in the mail (574-291-7444 ext 3).



Artist Group: Students & Buddies from SNAP (South Bend Community School Corporation): SNAP OT, Kathleen Petitjean, involved several classes of preschoolers in the design on their barrel. Using non-toxic tempera paints, the barrel was painted in shades of sky blue using paintbrushes, kid-sized paint rollers, sponges, and even their hands were used to create handprint tree branches and a rising sun. This project elicited academic and social skills such as "turn-taking" and following directions.



Artist Group: Washington High School (Adrianna Galacia): Mrs. Sprouls' Art students and Ms. Garcia's Language Arts students submitted design ideas for the WHS rain barrel. A panel of teachers chose the winning design by Adrianna Galacia, a WHS senior. Adrianna spent 2-3 hours a day for more than two weeks completing the painting of the WHS rain barrel.



Artist Group: St. Joseph's High School (Eleanor Harding): Painted by Eleanor Harding, SJHS senior, the circles on the SJHS barrel represent a bright hope for a cleaner and eco-friendly future. They are set against a monochromatic background representing the threatening path we could be heading down. Eleanor hopes this project will bring awareness to the importance of both water and soil conservation while taking a step toward a more sustainable future.

Along with the St. Joseph County SWCD, the following **UNDERWRITERS** have made this Project possible: IU South Bend Center for a Sustainable Future, South Bend Museum of Art, Barnaby's of South Bend, The Beehive Salon, Coca Cola Bottling Co. of Indiana, Fogley Landscape Co., Gary Mester, Master Photographer, Goodrich Auction Co., Just Goods, Martin's Supermarkets, Lawson-Fisher Associates, Lochmandy Collision Center, Purple Porch Co-op, Red Hen Turf Farm, Teachers and Therapists of SNAP, and The Troyer Group ... **THANK YOU!!!**



URBAN MEANDERINGS



Artist: Betty McKinney: It's been a while since Betty has taken up her paintbrushes, but she has recently set up a studio at her home. Betty's inspiration for her barrel's design was the barrel itself... She expanded on the idea that the barrel would be holding water and thought it would be fascinating to paint it as an aquarium.



Artist: Nicole Brinkmann Reeves: Nicole, lover of nature and the visual arts, was inspired by a photographer's work she saw long ago, which merged four photos into one so that the seasons blurred into one another from left-to-right. Nicole's finished barrel will show the changes of the season as seen around the landscape of farmland.



Artist: Michele Klota: The theme for Michele's barrel, "It's Raining Cats and Dogs," depicts her love for art, animals, and nature and her belief that all living creatures have a distinct and unique spirit and personality. Michele is donating the artist portion of the proceeds from the sale of her barrel to the St. Joseph County Humane Society.



Artist: David Murray: Graphic Designer, David Murray's barrel will be a play on corporate art—combining one of his favorite summer past-times (besides gardening), relaxing and cracking open "a cold one" with a plant's drink of choice (water), or "Rain Water Lite."



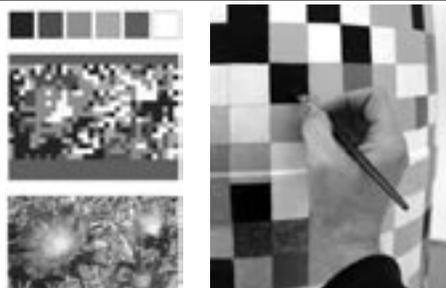
Artist: Mitzi B. Sabato: Mitzi's artwork reflects her interests in the human psyche, personal narrative, subjects of science, religion, astronomy, literature and photography. Her barrel design features two dragons (symbolic of wisdom and the primal forces of nature, religion and the universe) opening their mouths to receive a drop of water.



Artist: Jill La Fountain: Jill's barrel design was inspired by the critical life source the barrel will hold. Jill considered the emotions that come from water quenching one's thirst, diving into the ocean, and giving life to a garden of plants as she let the paint swirl and move until the barrel was covered with her vision of water.



Artist: Mike Depositar: When Lochmandy Collision Center Manager, Mike Depositar, was asked if his shop would be willing to donate the clear coat finish for this Original Art Rain Barrel Project, Mike readily agreed and offered his artistic talent for one of the barrels. Mike's Coca Cola-themed barrel was inspired by the fact that the 12 barrels donated by Coca Cola Bottling Co. for this Project, once contained Coke's secret ingredients.



Artist: William Tourtillotte: Educator, subsistence farmer, artist, and Chief Curator & Program Director at the South Bend Museum of Art, William is no stranger to exhibitions about water and sustainable design. His barrel design is an 8-bit pixel rendering of Dianthus flowers in his garden. Individual squares ordered in a grid combine to make the larger image - one drop at a time. William's website (www.artbert.com) reflects his commitment to environmental sustainability.



Artist & Rain Barrel Project Coordinator: Kathleen Petitjean: The Fellowship for this Project was granted to Kathleen last summer just as she was leaving for her first visit to Ireland. Knowing she would be painting a barrel, Kathleen carried her sketchbook on her trip and allowed the art and natural beauty of Ireland to infuse her work. Her barrel design was inspired by Ireland's signature art style, "Interlace," where bands of a motif are intertwined. It is Kathleen's hope that her barrel (and this Project) will serve as a gentle reminder for us to respect the resource we all need for survival; water.



Leave the Babies Alone

Spring is in the air, and with spring comes baby animals. Sooner or later you will find yourself in a situation wondering, *“What should I do with this little creature that I have found?”* The answer depends on the situation and is often contrary to what most people would prefer to do.

The following statements are intended to help you help the young of our wild neighbors:

- The mother will not abandon her young if they smell like humans.
- Very few adult animals will protect their young from a predator, this is especially true with mammals.
- Sometimes babies get eaten; it is not your job to save them.
- Rabbits usually nurse their young at night and very seldom will you see the mother with the babies. If your dog or cat should find a rabbit nest, put your pet back in the house and return the babies to the nest, even if injured. If you try to raise a baby rabbit that has its eyes closed, IT WILL DIE. If its eyes are open, it should be able to survive on its own.
- Birds basically do not have a sense of smell. If a baby bird falls out of the nest, return it to the nest. If you cannot find the nest, leave the bird alone. Yes, it may die, but if you try to raise the little bird, it will probably end up dying eventually. If it has feathers and is hopping and kind of flying, it has left the nest on its own and the parents will find it and continue to feed the baby. If you find an entire nest on the ground, place the nest and babies back in the tree as best you can; the parents will accept the new location.
- If you hear a bird-like twittering coming from your fireplace...congratulations, you have baby raccoons. The mother can climb in and out of the chimney, so do not worry that they are trapped. It will be about 2 months before the babies will leave. Playing loud music into the fireplace may get Mom to move the babies (the more bass the better). If that doesn't work and you want them removed, call a professional, just look in the yellow pages under “animal removal” or “pest removal”.

I realize that some of this advice may seem harsh but it is in the best interest of our wild neighbors and if you really want to help, provide them with what they really need, **HABITAT**.



Even though it is spring, keep your bird feeder full. Parents will still visit the feeder and eventually bring their young. Adding oranges, grape jelly and even mealworms and wax worms will increase the diversity of birds visiting your feeder.



YOUR County Parks & St. Joseph County SWCD Launch NEW “Nature Guides” Program

Who: Adults only (18 years & up) **When:** Thursdays, May 5-June 9, 2011 **Time:** 6-8:30pm EST
Where: Bendix Woods County Park: Nature Center **Fee for Entire Program Series:** \$65/person

Join us for this new program series designed for adults to learn more about the natural environment. These hands-on sessions, taught by area specialists and educators, include creating your own backyard wildlife habitat, the basics of bird watching, the importance of wetlands, plus much more! In addition to the evening classes, participants will be able to enjoy two off-site field trips. Classes meet every Thursday evening from May 5 through June 9. **Registration and payment are required by April 22.** To register call the County Parks: 574-654-3155.

(Min. Class Size 10; Max. Class Size 25)

May 5: Backyard Wildlife Habitats & Mammals of Indiana	May 12: Soils & Geology	May 19: Birding Basics	May 21: Birding Field Trip
May 26: Botany 101	June 2: Water Quality & Macroinvertebrates	June 4: Wetlands Field Trip	June 9: Creepy Crawlies



A New Front against Invasive Species

Two main groups in Northwestern Indiana are coming together to form a new front against the invasion of exotic invasive plant species. The Arrow Head Country Resource & Conservation Development (RC&D) area and the Northwest Territory RC&D (of which St. Joseph County SWCD is a member) are joining together to form the **Northwest Indiana Cooperative Weed Management Area (NICWMA)**. At this time NICWMA is comprised of 14 counties in northwest Indiana, and is being run by any and all volunteers that wish to be active in the fight against invasive species.

Currently NICWMA is meeting once a month to work on the process of writing a 5-year strategic plan and electing a steering committee, or type of executive board. More members will be needed to help with other various committees such as education, grant funding, and public relations, among other functions of the group.

While NICWMA is still in the beginning stages of its formation it is showing much promise for the future in the battle against invasive plant species. The main early focus of NICWMA will be on 5 key species: Oriental Bittersweet; Asian Honeysuckle; Common Reed (Phragmites); Purple Loosestrife; and Tree-of-Heaven. In the long-term, NICMA will focus on the education of the public about how to control and prevent future infestations of invasive plant species. Although this may be a few years into the future for this group, part of the education and prevention may someday also include an interactive website that will allow for early reporting from the general public of new infestation sites. Another encouraging aspect of NICWMA is the many partnerships it has already formed in its diverse volunteer base, along with the mentoring of other Cooperative Weed Management Areas in the state, and surrounding region.

To find out more information regarding invasive species and how to get involved with the NICWMA, please contact the St. Joseph County SWCD or the NICWMA steering committee president, James Potthoff (JPotthoff@dnr.in.gov).

You can also visit the National Network of Invasive Plant Centers to learn more about the issue of invasive species at and other established cooperative weed management projects at www.invasiveplantcenters.org. Another website to check out is the National Invasive Species Information Center (NISIC), a gateway to invasive species information; covering Federal, State, local, and international sources at www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov.

*****TAKE ACTION*****
NICWMA is still looking for people who would be interested in and enthusiastic about joining the fight against invasive plants.

Call us at 574-291-7444 ext. 3 to learn how to get involved.

SWCD Scheduling Native/Warm Season Grass Drill Rental for Planting Wildlife Food Plots, Warm Season Grasses, Filter Strips, Pastures (and Hay, too)

Through a partnership between the St. Joseph County SWCD and the Elkhart County SWCD, a warm season grass drill (WSG) is available for rent. The drill is used in area counties to promote the establishment of warm season grasses for wildlife areas. The drill can be used to plant food plots, seed filter strips, pasture plantings., and hay.

Landowners who are interested in planting **pastures** and **hay** will be charged a flat fee of \$50 for the first five acres. After the first five acres, there will be a charge of \$5 per acre.

Those who wish to plant **warm season grasses**, **food plots**, and **filter strips** will be charged a flat fee of \$25.

Please contact the St. Joseph County SWCD staff at 574-291-7444, ext. 3, if you are interested in renting this drill.





What is The Next Step in YOUR No-Till System?

If have you been utilizing No-Till equipment and methods for the past few years (or even decades) you might be wondering if you are truly getting all the benefits that you can. You might also be wondering if there is something more you could be doing. Well, the St. Joseph County SWCD would like to help you take that next step toward completing your No-Till system, with our “Cover-It-Green” Cover Crop Cost-Share Program (**DEADLINE TO APPLY: JULY 1, 2011**).

It seems that no matter what farm convention or field day you go to these days the topic of cover crops comes up in at least one of the sessions, and with good reason. As more research is being done regarding cover crops, it is becoming widely accepted that they are truly the next step in the No-Till system of farming. Research is showing more and more that the root systems of cover crops like annual and cereal ryes, as well as turnips and radishes, do very well at penetrating and loosening the soils for the No-Till drills to plant the cash crop into. Research is also showing that the cover crops are able to bind up nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus that would normally run off or through the soils with fall and spring rains. The nutrients, though, are still made available to the cash crops when the cover crop is killed off just before the spring planting, decomposing back into the soil, and thus reducing the need for fertilizer. Cover crops can also be used as a source of emergency forage for livestock if growing conditions are right.

Because of versatility of, and numerous benefits from, cover crops (especially when coupled with No-Till Systems) the St. Joseph County SWCD (with the help of a Clean Water Indiana Grant) is proud to offer financial assistance to producers who would like to try cover crops in their operations via our “Cover-It-Green” program. This program will allow producers to, on a competitive basis, receive a flat-rate payment of \$25/acre up to 23 acres to put towards costs to utilize the cover crop system. This flat rate payment can be received in conjunction with the NRCS’s cover crop assistance payments as well.

On March 16, 2011, the St. Joseph County SWCD hosted a Producers’ Cover Crop Breakfast and PARP Re-Certification Meeting to help local producers decide whether cover crops would be a practice that is suitable for their operations. Some of the topics included “Cover Crops for Soil and Water Quality,” “Are There Insect Issues with Cover Crops,” and “Making Cover Crops Work for You” (farmers’ panel). This event was made possible by 8 different sponsors (who we sincerely thank):

Platinum Sponsors: Indiana Corn Marketing Council and Indiana Soybean Alliance

Gold Sponsor: Frick Services, Inc.

Silver Sponsors: Scott Laidig, Pioneer Hi-Bred; ADM Nappanee Farm Service Center; Northwest Territory RC&D; and North Central Agri-Power, Inc.

Bronze Sponsor: Matthys Milling Services, Inc.

In the fall of 2011, we plan to hold an addition cover-crop event (most likely a field day).

As always if you have any questions regarding the cover crop cost-share programs or any of our the Farm Bill Programs, please feel free to contact our office. The phone number is 574-291-7444 ext 3, and our website is stjoseph.iaswcd.org.

Cover Crop Selector Tool Available on CCSI Website

by Hans Kok, Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative



Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative

The Midwest Cover Crop Council has developed a cover crop selector tool that is available on the Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative Website. The cover crop selector tool allows you to choose your county, cropping system, soil conditions and drainage type. It will return recommended planting dates for suitable cover crops. It also allows the user to select cover crops based on goals: nutrient production, nutrient scavenging, forage, crop rotation etc.

The selector tool can be found at www.CCSIN.org (click the Cover Crop icon at the bottom of the page, and choose Cover Crop Selector for Indiana Counties). While on the CCSI Web site, check out our other cover crop resources, videos on planter setup, and our list of upcoming events.



Help Available for Farmers Fighting Damaged, Wet Fields

The Indiana Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has \$6.5 million dollars available in **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)** funding for 2011. “Ag producers in Indiana have shown strong interest in WRP, especially since the 2008 flooding that did significant damage to crop fields along rivers and streams,” according to NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty

WRP is the federal government's largest wetlands restoration program. Through it, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and Indian Tribes to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands that have been degraded or converted for agricultural uses. More than 80% of restorable wetlands are in private ownership. Participation in WRP is completely voluntary. NRCS pays farmers for easements on fields that go into WRP. The easement is permanent and removes the field from agricultural production. Value is assigned to the land based on whether it is “Ag Land” or “Non-Ag Land.” NRCS uses Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARC), which are set for each county in the state. The GARC values for 2011 were increased 5% from their 2010 values. For instance, in St. Joseph County, the Ag Land rate is \$3,250, and the Non-Ag Land rate is \$1,950. Title to the land remains with the owner. If restoration work is needed, NRCS pays 100% of the costs, up to set maximum caps.

“We have had strong funding in the Wetlands Reserve Program for the last several years and have been able to offer opportunities to farmers who have had flood damaged fields, or fields where production has slipped because of repeated flooding. With WRP we restore these acres to the kind of conditions they were in before they were converted for farming,” said Hardisty. “This will reduce erosion on those fields, restore wildlife habitat, and enable those farmers to make improvements in other places in their farming operations.”

Estimated to have covered more than 220 million acres during colonial times, wetlands in the lower 48 states are now less than half that amount. Wetland losses in some states are more than 90%. More than 40% of federally listed species and over 50% of migratory birds require wetland habitats during some portion of their life cycle.

For more information about WRP, visit the Indiana NRCS WRP Web site at: www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/programs. Interested producers should contact their NRCS District Conservationist at a USDA Service Center to determine eligibility. In St. Joseph County, the number to call is 574-291-7444. ext. 3.

Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D Completes 20th Farmland Easement

Located in Angola, IN, and serving local citizens in DeKalb, Elkhart, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Whitley, and surrounding counties, the **Wood-Land-Lakes Resource Conservation and Development, Inc. (RC&D)** now has agreements to protect 20 Indiana farms from development. “The Land Committee formed in 1994 with the goal of preserving the area’s working farmland. In late December, Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D completed its 20th conservation easement,” said Kathy Latz, Coordinator.

Landowner Annie Sanders recently worked with Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D to preserve her wooded land in LaGrange County. Sanders wants to see the family farm protected from further subdivision and the building of additional residential structures. She plans to manage the woodland as productive woods and for watershed protection into the Pigeon River. In 2003, Sanders donated an agricultural conservation easement on 140 acres of adjacent cropland northwest of Howe.

Sanders said that this property still has a great appeal to her, her children and members of their extended family. “Protecting it permanently will give us a greater peace of mind about its future, and, I believe, be a benefit to the community as well as the neighborhood,” she said.

The farm still will be privately owned and managed. Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D will be the permanent guardian or holder of the conservation easement and monitor the woods annually. This is the fourth farm to be protected in LaGrange County with an easement held by Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D. Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D is a northeast Indiana not for profit targeting the protection of agricultural land.

For more information, contact Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D at 260.665.3211, ext. 5 or at www.wood-land-lakes.org.



ST. JOSEPH COUNTY SOIL & WATER
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St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District

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 Carole Riewe, Member
 Paul Williams, III, Member

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 Charles Lehman
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 Eugene Myers
 Richard Schmidt
 Arlene Schuchman
 Stacey Silvers
 Dale Stoner
 Dave Vandewalle
 Dru Wrasse

Honorary Members:

Bernard Byrd
 Al Gostola
 Jerry Knepp
 Keith Lineback
 William Millar



APRIL

- 4 - Last Day to Pre-Order Rain Barrels/Composters (call for details)
- 16 - Pick-Up Day for Pre-Ordered Trees (& Pre-Ordered Rain Barrels /Composters), and Extra Trees for Sale (see pg 1)
- 18 - **SWCD Monthly Board Mtg**, 7PM, Farm Bureau Mtg Rm.
- 22 - Good Friday - **OFFICE CLOSED**
- 22 - Happy Earth Day!
- 22 - Last Day to Register for Nature Guides Program (see pg 4)
- 24 - Happy Easter!

MAY

- 5 (thru **JUNE 9**) - Nature Guides Program (see on pg 4)
- 6 - Original Art Rain Barrel Auction (see pg 4)
- 16 - **SWCD Monthly Board Mtg**, 7PM, Farm Bureau Mtg Rm.
- 30 - Memorial Day - **OFFICE CLOSED**

JUNE

- 9 - Last Day of Nature Guides Program (see pg 4)
- 20 - **SWCD Monthly Board Mtg**, 7PM, Farm Bureau Mtg Rm.

JULY

- 1 - Deadline to Apply for SWCD's "Cover It Green" Cover Crop Cost-share Program (see pg 6)

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 Lisa Wynn, SWCD

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 Cindy Philhower
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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.