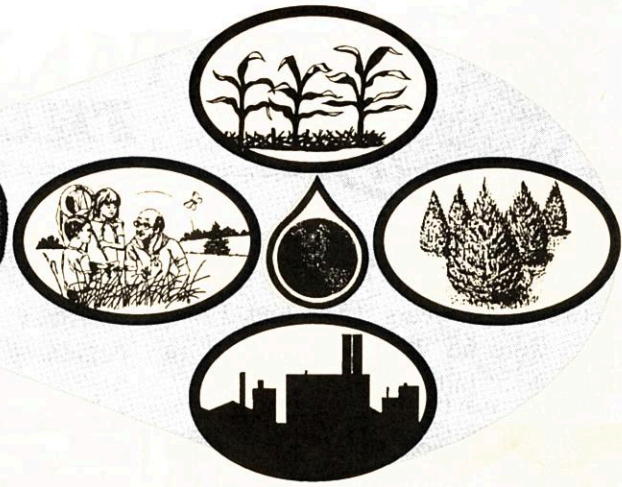




**St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District**

CONSERVATION

KALEIDOSCOPE



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

Jan/Feb/Mar 2004
Volume 6, Issue 1

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

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Calendar of Events

January 1

New Year's Day
Office Closed

January 15

Reservations Due for
Annual Meeting Dinner

January 19

Martin Luther King JR'S Birthday
Office Closed

January 20

SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 PM – Farm Bureau Mtg. Room

January 23

Annual Meeting Dinner

January 30

Annual Meeting Snow-Date

February 7

Science Alive – 9:30 – 4:00
St. Joseph County Public Library

February 16

George Washington's Birthday
Office Closed

February 17

SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 PM– Farm Bureau Mtg. Room

March 1

Tree Order Forms Due

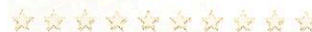
March 15

SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 PM – Farm Bureau Mtg. Room

*44th Annual Meeting
of the
St. Joseph County SWCD*



Dr. Ron Hanson



Dr. Ron Hanson is currently the Harlan Distinguished Professor of Agribusiness in the Department of Ag Economics at the University of Nebraska. He has earned numerous university and national recognitions for his outstanding teaching abilities and his dedicated work with students and farm families at the University of Nebraska.

Ron is a widely traveled speaker who shares a humorous but motivating message with farm audiences in a highly entertaining manner on the "true to life" family relationships and situations that can often arise between family when farming together in a family farming operation. Through the laughter audiences gain an enhanced appreciation for

- Friday, January 23, 2004
- St. Adalbert's Heritage Center
- 6:30 pm – Polish style dinner
- Guest Speaker: Dr. Ron Hanson
- Reservations due January 15th, 2004
- For reservations call: 574-291-2300, ext. 3

(In the event of inclement weather, the meeting will be held on January 30, 2004)

importance of "family" in their farm business operations. Dr. Hanson's impact and personal sharing will be long remembered.

Ron was raised on a family farm in western Illinois and earned his college degrees from Western Illinois University and the University of Illinois.

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THE NATURAL EDUCATOR

Believe It or Not!

Between the years 1919 and 1934, there were no White-Tailed Deer in the State of Indiana.



Scientists have put a 100 word vocabulary to the cawing of the crow.

Starlings, the robin sized black bird with a long pointed beak and short pointed wings and is here year round, is the only animal, besides humans, that will murder their own kind for no reason.

Earthworms can live to be up to 10 years old. The largest earthworm can grow to be 12 feet long and is found in Australia.

In a large pinch of soil, over 6 million living organisms can be found.

A short-tailed shrew's heart rate averages 500 beats per minute and can reach up to 1200 beats per minute.



150 big brown bats, the most common bat, can eat enough cucumber beetles each summer to protect farmers from 33 million of the beetles' rootworm larvae. These pests cost producers close to a billion dollars annually.

Pound for pound, a mother Mexican free-tailed bat produces more than five times as much milk as an average Holstein cow.

We only have one poisonous snake in Northern Indiana, the Massasauga Rattlesnake, which is listed as an Indiana Endangered specie.

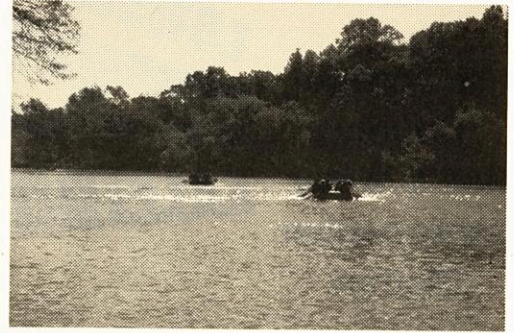


River Rafting a Big Success

October 15th marked the beginning of a new field trip, the St. Joseph River Rafting Expedition. Twenty eight students from Marion High School made the initial river run. Twelve person rafts, rented from the Arrowhead RC&D began the run at Keller's Park. Students learned about the history and things that effect the river on the first part of the journey. Rafts beached at the Darden street bridge for a talk on water quality. Back in the raft for the short journey to Clay Twp. Park for talks on soils, the local fisheries, general river safety, wildlife and lunch. The October sun made the final trip to St. Patrick's Park very enjoyable. Once at the park students studied the macroinvertebrate life of the river. Each raft took a test after each talk and the final act of the day was to pass out the candy bars to the winning raft.



The district will be sponsoring another rafting expedition on **May 5, 2004**. Space is limited but we do have openings available for any St. Joseph County High School Student. If you are interested in bringing a group call the office at 574-291-2300 ext. 3.

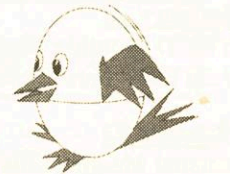


Avian Roly-Polys

Make a wobbly bird figure out of plastic pantyhose eggs.

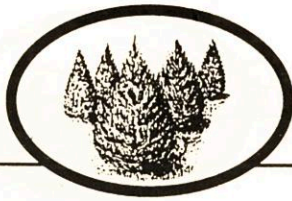
Materials needed:

- Plastic pantyhose eggs (white or black)
- Modeling Clay
- Scissors
- Construction Paper
- Tape or Glue



Your kids can make bird figures that will rock' n' roll all day long! Give each child a plastic egg and a lump of clay (about the size of a golf ball) and have them follow these steps:

1. Open the plastic egg and press the lump of clay into the smaller half. Put the egg back together and try to make it stand up. (If it doesn't, adjust the clay inside the egg.)
2. Using the illustrations shown and pictures in reference books as guides, cut out eyes, beaks, wings, and feet for your bird.
3. Tape or glue the cut-outs onto the egg. (If you use glue, let the glue become tacky before you press the bird parts on.) Then launch your bird's rock' n' roll career by giving it a push.



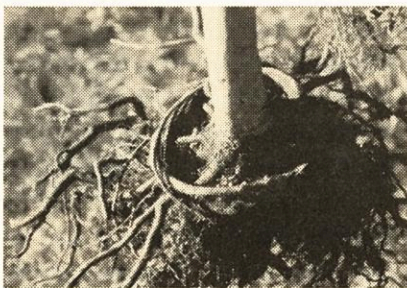
WOODLAND TIMES

Forestry News Updates for St. Joseph County

Myths About Planting Trees

I was reading a book the other day called 100 Tree Myths written by Alex L. Shigo. I ran across a couple of interesting myths that might be of help to everyone when it comes to planting trees.

Myth #5 Anybody can plant a tree correctly! While it is true that anyone can plant a tree, not everyone can do it correctly. Planting a tree improperly can lead to wasted time and money. When planting a tree, you need to not plant the tree too deep or too shallow. Also make sure that the hole you are planting your tree in is big enough to allow the roots to grow out and down. If the soil you are planting in has a high clay content, you need to make sure that there is not a barrier where you stopped digging the hole. If the roots cannot grow through a clay barrier, then the tree roots can start growing in a circle and start to choke the tree.



Myth #9 Lots of soil amendments are good in the planting site. Soil amendments are anything added to the soil to promote the growth of the tree which includes fertilizers and growth stimulators. It is very easy to over fertilize a tree, especially at planting time. When you apply too much fertilizer or place it directly in the hole you are

planting a tree, you can burn the roots and cause the tree to die. Here is a way to reduce the risk of hurting your tree by adding too many soil amendments. Before you plant a tree, get a soil fertility test of the site you want to plant the tree on. Then if the site needs some amendments added to correct fertility, add them before you are ready to plant. This can prevent over fertilization at planting time and give the tree the nutrients it needs to get off to a good start in its long life.

8 Questions to Consider When Planting a Tree

Ask yourself these questions before selecting a tree to plant and the site to plant it.

- 1) What tree species do I want to plant?
- 2) Will the tree species grow well on the soil types I want to plant it in?
- 3) Does the soil need any fertilizers or lime to correct the fertility levels or pH levels before planting the tree?
- 4) How tall and wide does the tree grow?
- 5) Are there any utilities buried or above ground that will interfere with the growth of the tree?
- 6) What is the purpose of the tree or trees you are planting?
- 7) Does the tree grow well in the temperature region you live in?
- 8) What are the lighting requirements for the tree to grow well?

If you can answer these questions, you are on the right track to planting the right tree in the right place. If you have further questions about the soils or the type of tree you want to plant, give us a call at (574) 291-2300 ext. 3.

Tree Seminar Scheduled for April 5, 2004

The St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District has a tree seminar scheduled for April 5, 2004, from 7 – 9 PM. It will be held at the Farm Bureau Building Meeting Room. Dave Duncan from Custom and Moore Tree Experts Inc. will be the speaker. The topics will include how to plant a tree and how to care for the trees after planting. Please call us at (574) 291-2300 ext. 3 to reserve your spot by April 2, 2004.

Three-County Forestry Field Day

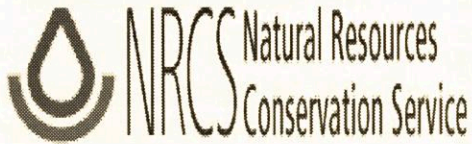
The Three – County Forestry Field Day was held on October 22, 2003 in Elkhart County. There were 50 people in attendance for the event. The speakers for the event included Tom Crowe, consulting forester, talking about “Timber Stand Improvement: Weeding Your Woodland,” Chris Egolf, consulting forester, talking about “Planning a Harvest Cutting,” Linda Byer, IDNR Wildlife Biologist, talking about “Managing Your Woodland for Wildlife,” and Larry Lichtsinn, IDNR District Forester, and Sam St. Clair, NRCS District Conservationist in Kosciusko County, talking about “Cost Share and Other Assistance Available.” Watch for information about the 2004 3-County Forestry Field Day in future newsletters.



Chris Egolf talks about the importance of this tree in planning a harvest cutting.



FIELD NOTES



2004 EQIP Sign Up Under Way

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is gearing up for another year of implementing conservation practices. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is accepting applications for the 2004 contracts. The ranking process has been fine tuned and each county is being guaranteed some funded applications.

EQIP is a voluntary program that provides assistance to farmers who face threats to soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land. EQIP began in 1997 and has been instrumental in improving water quality, conserving both ground and surface water, reducing soil erosion from cropland and forestland and improving grazing lands. EQIP is also used to improve riparian and aquatic areas, improve air quality and address wildlife issues. Increased funding for 2004 will expand program availability for producers.



Stop by the local Ag Service Center and ask about EQIP today!

Loss of Prime Farmland Reduces Our Ability to Produce Food and Fiber

Conversion of farmland to other uses is a concern for many Hoosiers. For others, it seems we have a limitless supply of land and converting farmland is no problem. One reason for this second way of thinking is because we live in the midst of the world's best and most productive farmland. Losing a few of these acres doesn't seem to be a big deal. The cumulative effect, however is taking a toll. In the twenty years since 1982 over 567,000 acres of land have been changed from agriculture to other land uses in Indiana. This is an area equal to 2.27 average sized counties. The impact is certainly a reduction in our ability to produce food and fiber.



The United States' corn belt has no equal in food production in the world. Well over 50 percent of Corn Belt land is considered to be prime farmland. Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food and fiber crops. It has the combination of soil properties, growing season and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops in an economic manner if it is treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. It is simply the best land there is for food and fiber production. Indiana is such a

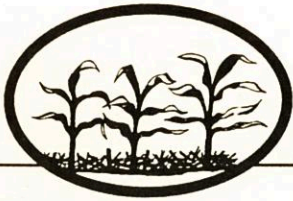
productive state because almost 65 percent of its rural area is prime farmland whereas, in comparison, less than 0.3 percent of New Mexico is prime farmland. Indiana is exceeded in the percent of prime farmland only by Illinois where a little over 65 percent of the land is prime farmland.



A great way to illustrate the importance of protecting farmland, and to treat yourself to a healthy snack, is with an apple. Think of the apple as representing the earth.



First cut the apple into four equal parts. Set three pieces aside because they represent the oceans and seas of the world where man cannot live. They are the first part of your snack. Then cut the remaining quarter of the apple in half lengthwise and set one piece aside. It represents the parts of the earth that are too cold, too steep or otherwise unfit for human life. Set that piece aside. Finally cut the remaining one-eighth of the apple into four equal parts and put three of these parts aside for your snack. Those three pieces represent areas where man can live but cannot produce food, such as deserts, rocky seashores and steep mountainsides.



FIELD NOTES

You have one piece left – representing the one-thirty-second of the earth’s surface where man can both live and produce food. Only a small fleck of this part is prime farmland and we are privileged to live in the midst of the area represented by that small fleck. The corn belt of America’s heartland is included in that small part of the earth’s surface that is home to life and food production and makes up a significant part of that small fleck that is prime farmland. Now enjoy your snack.

Farmland conservation is a goal of Indiana’s 92 local soil and water conservation districts and their conservation partners. Farmland conservation is accomplished by making land use decisions based on soil and other resource information. The best land can be protected for agricultural purposes, while development is steered toward other areas. Soil and Water Conservation Districts can be the focal point for providing information to developers, industrial planners, planning commissions and other decision makers and can be of great help as they make responsible decisions about our future capability to produce food and fiber.

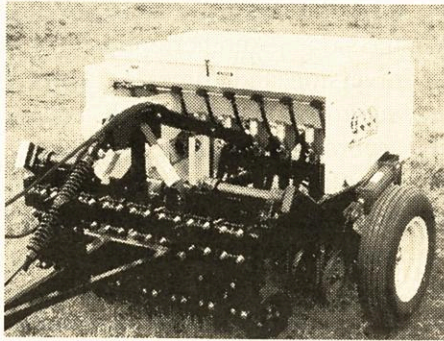


Warm Season Grass Drill Available

In St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties last year, over 100 acres of wildlife habitat pasture interseeding and new pasture and hay plantings were put in.

These plantings were made possible through the use of a Warm Season Grass Drill owned jointly by the St. Joseph County SWCD, the Elkhart County

SWCD and Pheasants Forever.



Truax FlexII Warm Season Grass Drill

There is no charge for the use of the WSG Drill for wildlife habitat plantings, however, there is a \$5.00 charge per acre for pasture and hay plantings.

The drill has a planting width of 6 feet and has three seed boxes for a variety of seed plantings:

•**Front Seed Box**

Small seeds such as;
Wildflowers, Clovers,
and Alfalfa.

•**Middle Seed Box**

Warm season grasses or prairie grasses such as;
Indiangrass, Big Blue Stem,
and Little Blue Stem.

•**Back Seed Box**

Cool season grasses such as;
Orchard Grass, Timothy
and Ryegrass.
Food Plot Seed such as;
Sunflowers and Sorghum

Using a tractor to pull the drill requires a minimum horsepower rating of 50, with a place to hook up 2 hydraulic hoses for raising and lowering the drill.

If you are interested in scheduling the use of the WSG Drill, or have other questions, please call the office at (574) 291-2300, ext. 3



Food Plot Seed Available

The St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District will have food plot seed available this Spring, provided by Quail Unlimited.

Food plot seed will be Sorghum, and the possibility of Sunflower and Corn.

There is no charge for the seed, however, it is required that the seed is planted as food for wildlife.



If you are interested in planting a Wildlife Food Plot, and to check on the availability of seed, please call the office at (574) 291-2300 ext. 3.



Wildlife Food Plot



URBAN MEANDERINGS

Ground Covers for Steep Slopes

Steep slopes present both challenging and wonderful opportunities for landscaping your property. Steep banks are difficult and dangerous to mow and considerable time can be spent weed eating these areas. Soil erosion from steep banks can become a serious problem if vegetation can not be established. South facing slopes tend to warm up quicker and dry out faster than north facing slopes which receive less direct sunlight. This also means that the north facing slopes tend to stay cooler than southern facing slopes. East facing slopes will receive less direct sunlight than west facing slopes. This means plants on the east facing slopes generally have less stress from lack of rainfall than ones on the west facing slopes.

You need to take an inventory of your site to help you in determining what options are available to you. What direction does your steep slope face? Is the site sunny or partially shaded by trees? Is the soil sandy, loamy or high in clay content? What type of lawn setting do you prefer formal, manicured look, or a more natural look? Don't be afraid to seek the help of professionals in a nursery or landscaping store in helping you make planting choices.

Next, what is above and below the steep slope? Is there a gentle slope before the steep slope drops off? Does surface water have a chance to pick up speed before heading over the steep slope? The soil erosion on the steep slope will be much greater if storm runoff from surface areas above the slope travels over a non-vegetated slope. Also if the runoff has time to gain speed before going over the steep slope it can cause more erosion.

A couple things you can do to help prevent this is have the area above the steep slope in a grass cover that will slow the runoff down before it gets to the slope. Another option is to build a diversion and force the water to run down the slope through a tile that is secured to the slope and has a place to outlet at the bottom. This can help get the ground cover established during heavy rain events.

If you prefer a well maintained and neat looking lawn, then planting low growing ground cover would be a good option. There are numerous plants that are available that will blanket the soil and reduce the impact of raindrops. Many of these plants remain neat looking and require little or no maintenance. Low growing species of juniper will do well on sunny and dry locations. Junipers spread rapidly and vary in texture and color from green to blues. In shady spots, pachysandra does well. This plant remains green throughout the winter and spreads easily. Although DNR has listed



Here is an example of pachysandra being used to help stabilize a slope in the shade.

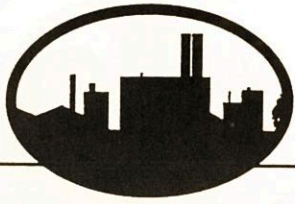
some non-native plants as invasive, they can be suited to help control erosion on steep banks. Periwinkle, for example, is a plant that does well in shady conditions and can help stabilize a steep bank quickly.

When planting ground cover on steep slopes, try to avoid planting into bare soil. When this is not possible, mulching around the plants with organic mulch will help keep the plants from drying out. It will also help hold the soil in place until the plant can establish its roots. If you are planting into existing sod, it is recommended that you kill the sod and plant into the sod mulch. The sod mulch will help reduce soil erosion and help the ground cover become established. In conventional plantings, mulching around the planted ground cover helps the area look neat, conserves soil moisture and can reduce soil erosion on the steep slope. Providing extra water during dry periods will help the young plant become established.

If you prefer a more natural look, planting wildflowers and native warm season grasses on the steep incline of your lawn is an option. Once established these natural plants can provide season long food, color and shelter for birds and wildlife. Periodic mowing can be used to control growth and keep woody shrubs and trees from becoming established. Check on local ordinances dealing with unmowed areas prior to planting.



Warm season grasses and wildflowers are shown here helping stabilize this slope.



URBAN MEANDERINGS

New Stormwater Rules for Construction Sites Effective November 26, 2003

A revised rule governing stormwater discharges from construction sites became effective on November 26, 2003. General Permit rule 327 IAC 15-5, Indiana's Stormwater Quality from Construction Sites regulation, is part of the State's effort to comply with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) established by the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) through the Clean Water Act. The revised rule is part of the Phase 2 implementation of the NPDES program. The intent of the NPDES program is to reduce pollutants entering our surface waters.

Specifically, 327 IAC 15-5 is intended to regulate stormwater discharges from construction sites, which disturb one (1) acre or more, or are part of a larger common plan of development or sale.

The rule requires that potential stormwater pollutants be minimized, throughout construction, along with the inherent pollutants associated with the new landuse. In addition, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, meeting the requirements of the rule, must be submitted to the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in the county where the project is being proposed. Also, a Notice of Intent (NOI) form, along with a permit fee, must be sent to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), the agency that administers and enforces the regulation.



To comply with the new regulation, construction projects that will disturb one (1) acre or more are required to

develop a Construction Plan, including a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, meeting the requirements of the rule. The plan is required to be submitted to the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in the county where the project is being proposed at least 28 days prior to the expected start date for the project. Staff at the SWCD office will review the plans, and if no changes are necessary for the plans to comply with the requirements, the project may begin. If changes are necessary, the project designer must make the appropriate changes before construction operations are started.



The rule also requires that potential stormwater pollutants be minimized in stormwater discharges from the site by implementing measures to prevent the transport of the pollutants. These measures include the installation of erosion and sediment control practices to minimize sediment discharges, changes in sequencing to reduce the amount of exposed soils, self-monitoring procedures to make sure adequate protections are in place and functioning properly, material handling and storage procedures to reduce the chance of spills of hazardous materials, modification of the project design to minimize potential pollutants from the completed project among others.



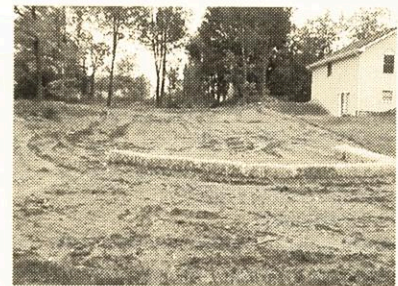
Construction sites that disturb five (5) acres or more have been required to draft erosion and sediment control plans, and to implement those plans on their sites since September of 1992

to minimize stormwater pollutants during construction. SWCD and



Division of Soil Conservation of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources staff have been reviewing plans, providing technical assistance and inspecting the construction sites for compliance, which will continue. The new rule reduces the land disturbance threshold to one (1) acre and adds several other requirements to better reduce potential pollutants leaving construction sites in storm runoff. For more information regarding the new rule requirements, contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District office or the IDNR, Division of Soil Conservation, Stormwater and Sediment Control Program at 317-233-3870.

(Article provided by Chuck Westfall, IDNR, Stormwater Specialist)





**St. Joseph County Soil and Water
Conservation District
5605 U.S. 31 South, Suite 4
South Bend, IN 46614**

St. Joseph County Soil And Water

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Richard Schmidt

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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Harold Mutti

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