MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, December 15, 2015

I. CALL TO ORDER - On Tuesday December 15, 2015, at 7:06 pm a regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the St. Joseph County SWCD at the Centre Township Branch of the St. Joseph County Public Library was called to order by John Dooms, Chairman.

PRESENT – SWCD
John Dooms, Chair/Supervisor
Stacey Silvers, Supervisor
Mike Burkholder, Supervisor
Jim LaFree
Dale Stoner
Dave Vandewalle

PRESENT – SWCD/NRCS
Debbie Knapp, NRCS DC
Jan Ivkovich
Dru Wrasse
Rick Glassman, SWCD EEC
Sandra Hoffarth, SWCD Admin Assistant
Sarah Longenecker, SWCD CC

Present -

ABSENT – SWCD
EX-OFFICIO
Jeremy Cooper, Vice-Chair/Supervisor
Arlene Schuchman, Supervisor
n/a
n/a

PRESENT –
Public
James Rodriguez, NRCS SC
Chuck Lehman
Randy Matthys
Carole Riewe
Richard Schmidt
Dave Craft
Joe Long

II. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA -

III. REGULAR BUSINESS
A. Legislative Updates – Dooms passed around a copy of the legislative notebook that will be taken to Indy in January.
B. Conservation Moment – Hoffarth told the board the details of the NRCS contract agreement (PSS) and annual payment process.
C. Indiana Conservation Partnership Updates – n/a
D. Minutes: October 20, 2015 board meeting – The minutes were reviewed and approved as submitted.
E. Treasurer’s Report: (11/18/15-12/15/15) – The treasurer’s reports were both reviewed and approved as submitted.
F. Approval of Claims (11/18/15-12/15/15) - A recommendation (Ivkovich, LaFree) & motion (Silvers, Burkholder) was made to approve Claim Nos. 11063-11071 for a total of $2,730.08 as presented. Both carried.

IV. OLD BUSINESS
A. St. Joseph Co. Soil & Water Conservation Partnership Staff Written Reports – The field office report was presented to the board and reviewed. (Attached). Knapp went over the NRCS talking points (attached) as well as handed out the Client Gateway postcards to all in attendance.
B. Committee Reports
  a. Annual Meeting – Vandewalle announced that Hoffarth has tickets printed and ready to go! They were passed out after the meeting concluded. All money and remaining tickets are due back to her January 19th (next board meeting date). Also forms for the silent auction are available contact Hoffarth. We have 3 sponsors so far with room for 3 or more additional. Anyone wanting to sponsor contact Hoffarth.
  b. Rural Conservation – Burkholder updated the board on the planning for our 2016 Producers Meeting. The date was moved to March 22 due to schedule conflicts with the key note speakers. Otto Doering and Hans Kok have been confirmed as our key note speakers. Tickets will be $15 each to help cover expenses. Letters will be going out to prospective vendors. Vendor booth space will be $250 for a 2’X6’ table space and will include 1 lunch ticket (additional lunch tickets can be purchased at $15/ea.). The committee/staff are looking into pricing reusable bags and folders as giveaways for each participant. We will be using our $1,000 education money received from our 2016 CWI grant. Each county will also be given a vendor booth space to promote their county and get information out about the CWI cost share programs. See attached report for preliminary agenda.
C. 2016 Budget – A recommendation (Vandewalle, Ivkovich) and motion (Burkholder, Silvers) was made to accept the 2016 budget as presented. Both carried.
D. 2016 Annual Work Plan – Glassman added compost seminars to April. Ivkovich recommended we move the AWP confirmation to December’s meeting instead of January and to present it at the November meeting. A recommendation (Wrasse, Vandewalle) and motion (Silvers, Burkholder) was made to accept the AWP with the revisions names. Both carried.

V. NEW BUSINESS
A. Schedules/ Upcoming Events / Any Related Claims - calendars were handed out explaining upcoming special events & holiday schedules on the back of the agenda.
a. **Leadership Institute – Feb 5-6 Board Development** – this will be held in Wabash, IN! Perfect timing for the board recruitment meeting being held in Feb. Cost is $150/person. Let Hoffarth know if you’d like to attend so it can be approved during the January meeting.

b. **Growing Summit – March 12-13** – Longenecker asked if any supervisor would like to be involved as far as giving a topic speech. Those interested or if you’d like more information see Longenecker.

B. **Cobus Creek Watershed Diagnostic Study** – Glassman passed out a fact sheet containing a map of the watershed. He then informed the board that if anyone is interested in joining the steering committee to let staff know so you can receive e-mail updates. Ivkovich and Wrasse said they might be interested.

C. **Michiana Stormwater Partnership (MSP)- doggie bag dispensers** – Longenecker let the board know that the MSP is ordering doggie poop bag dispensers and asked if we would like to go in with them to purchase some to hand out at our events mainly Science Alive since that will be mostly urban participants. It was recommended (Ivkovich, Silvers) and a motion (Silvers, Burkholder) to spend $500 to purchase doggie bag dispensers. Both carried.

**VI. PRIVILEGE OF FLOOR** – Glassman reminded the board that Feb we will be having our recruitment meeting and to get names to the staff so we can send personal invitations to them. John Dooms took a few minutes to thank the board and staff for the hard work throughout 2015. He gave each of the staff a Christmas card on behalf of the board of supervisors.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT** – The board meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Hoffarth
Administrative Assistant
St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District
2903 Gary Drive, Plymouth, IN 46563
Email: Sandra.hoffarth@in.nacdnet.net
www.stjosephswcd.org

Approved by:

________________________
Supervisor

________________________
Supervisor

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Supervisor
NRCS Contract Agreement
Program Support Services (PSS)

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**Purpose**

The purpose of this agreement is to deliver administrative assistance on EQIP, CSP and CTA programs to landowners in Indiana as authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill. Contracts assigned to this agreement are 2015 contracts only.

**Timeframe**

Start: June 1, 2015
End: December 1, 2016

**Contracts by County**

- St. Joseph = 7
- Miami = 21
- Wabash = 15
Environmental Quality Incentive Program

- Field visit and process payments for –
  - 4 cover crop contracts
  - 1 Nutrient Management
  - 1 Irrigation management
  - 1 Fence for Grazing
  - 1 Seasonal High Tunnel
  - 1 Heavy use Area
  - 2 Roof Runoff Structures
  - 1 Animal Trail and Walkway
  - 1 Filter Strip
  - 1 Invasive Species Control
  - 1 No-till

Sandra processed 2 payment requests for Miami County NRCS

- Field visit for new applications – 1 Native Wildlife habitat; 2 pollinator/monarch butterfly habitat
- Contract modifications – Substitute Roof Runoff practices
- Correct acreage in contract

- 2 new cover crop applications
- Toolkit folders for 10 new applications
- Contract Reviews –
- Processed cancellation request

Wetland Reserve Program

- Enhancement planning meeting between Pokagon Tribe and NRCS

Conservation Reserve Program

- 4 grazing applications received
- Field evaluation for 3 applications – 1 Grassed Waterway and 2 Filter Strips
- Soil loss figured for 2 contracts

Conservation Stewardship Program

- Payments processed for 5 participants
- Contract reviews completed for 5 contracts

RULE 5/13

- 3 SWPPP reviews

Wetlands – 7 (Marshall)
  - 5 (St Joseph)

Met with FSA County Committee for meeting on a wetland violation

Newsletter articles/layout

Assemble legislative Notebook

53 in-school programs for 13 schools

Science Alive Display

Cover Crop Transect – 2 days
Meetings

Staff Meetings – 4
NRCS Area Meeting
MSP meeting – Sarah
NRCS Contracting Training – Sandra
Forestry Training – Sarah
Food and Ag Council
Managing for Excellence – James
Met with 2 NRCS offices for contracting info (Sandra)

Webinars: Non-traditional Grazing
Warm Season Grass plantings
Webinar – project Wild
Quarterly Supervisor’s meeting
Rural Conservation Committee
IDEA Planning – Sandra
FY 16 Budget
Indiana NRCS has received our initial allocations for fiscal year 16 (FY16). While funding for technical assistance (TA) has decreased by about $2.5 million, financial assistance (FA) has increased by approximately $3 million. Total funding for FY16 has increased by more than $400,000.

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Farm Bill Program Updates

Monarch Butterfly Habitat Conservation
NRCS recently launched a special effort to improve habitat for monarch butterflies in 10 Midwest and Southern Plains states to address diminishing populations of this important species due to the decline of native plants like milkweed. Because monarch butterflies are always on the move, they need to have the right plants at the right time along their migration route.

NRCS worked with The Xerces Society and butterfly experts to choose the best milkweed species and nectar-producing plants to recommend to landowners. This targeted effort will invest $4 million in 2016 to help combat the decline of this important pollinator using funds from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), remaining funds from the former Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

Indiana is one of 10 states selected for this program because we are in the heart of the Monarch’s migration area. We will focus on conservation practices that provide buffer habitat along waterways and in wetlands, cover crops and pasture management and that increase soil health, control invasive species and provide other beneficial wildlife habitat.

Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- January 15 is the cutoff for ACEP applications (including Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE and Ag Lands Easements (ALE)). Rankings will be scheduled prior to March 1 for all FY 2016 applications making the cutoff date. There is a new ranking form for 2016 and it has been posted to the NRCS website.
  (http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/in/programs/easements/acep/?cid=stelprdb1248149)
- Over the course of the next year, NRCS will be make extra efforts to contact and meet with all easement landowners. This is an effort to make sure communication between the landowners and the agency remains open, and that concerns or issues with the easements can be addressed before there is a serious problem.
- The Monarch habitat initiative can be used to enhance existing Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)/WRE easements. Landowners may work with their local DC to apply for funds to increase suitable monarch/pollinator habitat on their WRP/WRE easements.
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- NRCS will be conducting a statewide review of all active EQIP and CSP contracts obligated from 2011 to 2015 that were contracted under an entity participant Employer ID Number (EIN). Evaluations involve validation of contract DUNS numbers and SAM.gov registration and will involve field, area and state level coordination.

- CSP 16-1 Renewal applications have all been preapproved and District Conservationists should request Quality Assurance from the Area Program Staff. Indiana had a December 21st deadline for obligation and to work with area staff for any flexibility needed. These will be the last CSP applications which will be evaluated using the Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT). General CSP 16-1 sign-up will be offered under new ranking process similar to EQIP and is anticipated for the new calendar year.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
The sign up deadline for EQIP applications is January 31st to be considered for FY-16 funding. In addition to EQIP General the deadline applies to the following initiatives:
- EQIP Conservation Activity Plans
- National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)
- Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)
- National Organic Initiative
- National On-Farm Energy Initiative
- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

Many applicants have interest in addressing soil erosion and water quality issues on cropland. However, there is also funding for grazing land operations, confined livestock operations, drainage water management, nutrient management plans, and wildlife habitat improvement.

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) Survey
As part of a national CEAP study, NASS is contacting farmers to provide input that will measure the environmental benefits associated with implementation and installation of conservation practices on cultivated and non-cultivated agricultural lands. Data obtained from the project will help NRCS conservationists and partners determine the efficiency and effectiveness of current conservation techniques and help identify best practices.

NASS has completed the screening phase of the CEAP project and determined there are 435 eligible points in Indiana. They will be starting the farmer interview process soon, which will continue through February. NRCS staff are also responsible for completing a portion of the survey (the Supplemental Survey) and this will happen after some initial training starting January 11 and running through March. If you have any questions, please contact Rick Neilson, NRCS Soil Scientist, at 317-295-5875 or rick.neilson@in.usda.gov.

Avian Bird Flu Updates: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5 (HPAI)
On a national level, continued surveillance of the wild bird migration patterns in the Mid-Atlantic fly zone found a wild bird which tested positive for the H5 Avian Influenza. USDA Secretary Vilsack has enacted the Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Team made up of all relevant agencies that will assess current needs, surge needs, agency resources, and skill capability from each agency and how these capacities can be quickly mobilized and brought to bear in the unfortunate event of an outbreak or pandemic.
Guidance that NRCS employees received August 26th remains in place until further notice. This guidance continues to suspend all direct contact with all poultry areas or areas with recently spread poultry manure, but allows for access to portions of farms where poultry are not located. Communication with the farmer is required, and biosecurity protocols must be followed. For more information visit BOAH’s website at: www.in.gov/boah/2390.htm.

Report sick poultry, including backyard poultry, by calling the Healthy Birds Hotline: 1-866-536-7593. Indiana's state and federal veterinarians are receiving and triaging these calls. Citizens who see five or more wild, feeder-type birds dead should call the Indiana Department of Natural Resources at: 812-334-1137. More information on avian influenza is available online at: www.in.gov/boah/2390.htm.

Conservation Client Gateway (CCG) is Available for Individual Farmers: Please help us continue to spread the word that Conservation Client Gateway is available to all individual farmers. CCG is a secure website that makes it easy for farmers to access conservation information and request assistance. Client Gateway will be extended to business entities and available on mobile devices in the future. For more information check out the website www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway. CCG is completely voluntary, NRCS field staff will still be available in for individual assistance.

Wrap up of International Year of the Soil and World Soil Day – December 5
We are coming to a close for the 2015 International Year of the Soils, which has brought unprecedented focus to the importance of our soils and has inspired people across the world to take a second look at what is under their feet. NRCS has used this opportunity to promote soil health to encourage people to make changes in the way they care for it. World Soil Day on December 5 is yet another opportunity to celebrate and bring recognition to this nonrenewable resource and how we can utilize soil health practices to improve and sustain it.
Cobus Creek Watershed is a scenic watershed located in both Michigan and Indiana: Cass County, Michigan and Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties, Indiana. Its 23,413 acres are composed primarily of agriculture in the north, developed residential and commercial land uses in the south, and forest and wetlands sprinkled among several surface water bodies. Many residents live in close proximity to Cobus Creek or one of the watershed's seven lakes and many are very interested in continuing the tradition of preserving the health of their creek, lakes, and 1,600 acres of wetlands. This watershed is especially unique in that it is one of the very few cold-water streams in Indiana supporting a naturally reproducing population of brown trout, walleye, and blue gill, making it a popular spot for local anglers. These resources give reason as to why Cobus Creek Watershed is held in high regard by its landowners and stakeholders.

"Beyond its ecological importance... Cobus Creek provides significant social and economic benefits to the residents of Michiana through recreational and quality of life benefits, and increased property values."

-Biological Community Assessments of Cobus Creek (2014)

Size: 23,413 ac.

Municipalities:
- Indiana - Elkhart & Granger
- Michigan - Edwardsburg

Population: ~15,600 residents

Landuse:
- Agriculture (43%)
- Developed (35%)
- Forest (14%)

Water Resources
- 25 mi. of streams
- 1,603 ac. of wetlands
- 7 named lakes

Unique Resources
- Natural trout reproduction
- High wetland retention
  - 68% of pre-settlement wetlands preserved
- Cobus Creek County Park
- Boot Lake Nature Preserve