



St. Joseph  
County  
Soil & Water  
Conservation  
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

May/June 2018  
Volume 20, Issue 3

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### What's Going On...

Events hosted by the St. Joseph County SWCD  
& Our Partners in Conservation

#### May

8th - Primary Election Day  
County Holiday

15th - Monthly Board Meeting - Open to the Public 7 PM LOCATION: Alligator Room Centre Township Library at Kern and Miami Roads in South Bend - 1150 Kern Road South Bend, IN 46614

18th - Clean Water Indiana cost share application deadline for cover crops, no-till, nutrient management, pollinator habitat & filter strips.

28th - Memorial Day office closed

#### June

1st week

National Gardening Week

19th - Monthly Board Meeting - Open to the Public 7 PM LOCATION: Alligator Room Centre Township Library at Kern and Miami Roads in South Bend - 1150 Kern Road South Bend, IN 46614

21st - First day of Summer

#### July

4th - Independence Day office closed

17th - Monthly Board Meeting - Open to the Public 7 PM LOCATION: Alligator Room Centre Township Library at Kern and Miami Roads in South Bend - 1150 Kern Road South Bend, IN 46614

## Indiana NRCS to Expand Targeted Conservation Effort for Wildlife on Agricultural Lands

### New Project Offers Opportunities for Producers to Restore, Protect Blanding's Turtle

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is adding Blanding's turtle, a native species found in several parts of Indiana to its Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) projects. WLFW a targeted, science-based effort that helps producers restore and protect habitat for declining species on farms and forestlands.

With more than two-thirds of the continental United States under private ownership, wildlife depends heavily on working lands for habitat and food. WLFW projects focus on declining species that have needs compatible with agricultural practices and rural land management that can benefit from conservation on private lands. So far, WLFW has helped producers restore 8.4 million acres of habitat for eight target species, such as the Monarch butterfly and Golden winged warbler.

Farmers and forestland owners in Indiana, Illinois, Ohio and Michigan can help reverse the decline of the



Blanding's turtle occupied HUC 8 watersheds in the United States. Watersheds highlighted in bright green represent the priority landscape for the WLFW Midwest Blanding's Turtle Initiative.

Blanding's turtle by increasing available high-quality habitat to support their recovery through land protection, as well as restoration and enhancement of habitat.

"Agriculture and wildlife both thrive together through landscape conservation," said Jill Reinhart, acting state conservationist in Indiana. "We're excited about this opportunity for our



landowners to help the Blanding's turtle, as well as improve their own operations."

NRCS works with a large number of stakeholders and partners to determine the areas of greatest potential impact for WLFW projects. NRCS and conservation partnership staff are available to help producers with a conservation plan that benefits both the species and the agricultural operation. Examples of practices include conservation covers, riparian forested buffers, wetland creation and restoration, and management of invasive plants. Financial assistance is available to cover part of the cost of conservation practices.

When habitat is restored for Blanding's turtle, it is also good for many other species, such as migratory waterfowl, marsh birds, and gamebirds such as the Northern Bobwhite Quail. Conservation efforts also improve water quality and floodwater retention, and offer opportunities for hunting and outdoor recreation.

"The future of wildlife, agriculture and our rural communities depends on our collective ability to transfer our Working Lands for Wildlife model to more working landscapes," Reinhart said.

For more information about NRCS and other technical and financial assistance available through conservation programs, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted) or contact your district conservationist Deborah Knepp at 574-936-2024 Ext. 4.



## Experts talk soil health

Written and produced by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service

### For maximum benefit, mix it up, cover crop expert recommends

There's a reason most farmers who start with single species cover crops eventually move to mixes.

"Some of the most innovative cover crop users have continued to experiment with as many as 8 - 15 different cover crops in mixtures on their farms, to see what each contributes to their system," says David Lamm of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "These farmers are breathing new life into their soils, with no-till and cover crop mixes, and they're telling us they're getting all kinds of benefits. A universal result is increased nutrient cycling, and in many cases a reduction in supplemental fertility is achievable."

Lamm, the leader for the NRCS National Soil Health and Sustainability Team in Greensboro, North Carolina, points to three of the top advantages to using mixtures:

1. No one species can deliver all the advantages multiple cover crops deliver in combination. Some fix nitrogen, some are very good at scavenging leftover nitrogen in the soil, and some have deep roots that extend benefits deeper into the soil profile. Still others help control specific weeds or attract beneficial insects, etc.
2. Each plant species offers a different chemical signature to the soil through the rhizosphere, which provides a different food source for bacteria and fungi in the soil. More variety in the food source creates the habitat for a greater variety of soil organisms—most of which have a positive impact within the soil.
3. Organic matter production is put on the fast track. A diversity of plants above ground creates underground habitat with a healthy balance of predator and prey organisms in the soil. The balance results in improved nutrient cycling.

"We need to think about the organisms in the soil that cycle nutrients," Lamm says. "Adding a diversity of roots to a soil that has seen only monoculture crops can awaken and ignite those organisms."

### Many considerations 'in the mix' when choosing cover crops, expert says

There are a lot of things for farmers to consider when deciding how to mix that perfect cocktail – ah, of cover crops.

"Seed availability, cost, seeding methods, ability to terminate the plants and other factors enter into the number of species a farmer might use," says David Lamm of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "Some studies suggest six to eight species from

three of the four groups would be about right," Lamm says. "Our NRCS plant materials centers are conducting a three-year study to look at this."

Lamm says location dictates the amount of growing season available, so it should be considered when selecting varieties of cover crops.

There are a number of common mixes being recommended depending on the location in the country. For the northern Corn Belt, Lamm says a common mix is cereal rye, hairy vetch, winter peas and daikon radish.

"But producers shouldn't limit themselves to these mixes," Lamm says. "They should continue to experiment to see what might work best on their farms." He suggests interested farmers talk with farmers who have long-term experience, too.

### Different cover crops yield different benefits, expert says

All cover crops are not created equally. That's both the beauty and the challenge of coming up with the right mix for each farm.

Jim Hoorman, an assistant professor and Extension educator for Ohio State University, says each cover crop has a special purpose – with specific benefits. Hoorman says legume cover crops, are typically used to produce homegrown nitrogen. Grass cover crops are used to increase soil organic matter, recycle excess nutrients, and reduce soil compaction. Brassica covers are grown to loosen the soil, recycle nutrients and suppress weeds and plant pathogens.

Other covers can be grown to suppress harmful insects or attract beneficial insects. Some cover crops may attract insect pests or become hard to kill, while others require little management.

There are hundreds of crop rotations to consider with cover crops, Hoorman says, so there's quite a lot of thinking to do when you introduce cover crops into your operation. For conventional tillers who want to begin a no-till program simultaneously with a cover crop, Hoorman suggests two cover crop rotations to consider:

1. Wheat, sorghum sudangrass, early maturing soybeans, winter pea or crimson clover with oilseed radish, corn, cereal rye, soybeans, back to wheat.
2. Corn, cereal rye, early maturing soybeans, brassica (oilseed radish) plus legume (crimson clover or winter pea).

For more information on how to "Unlock the Secrets in Your Soil," call or visit your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office or visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).

# Construction Best Management Practices (BMP's)



A few of these control measures include properly installed silt fence, stormwater inlet filters, temporary construction entrances, and temporary seeding of disturbed areas that will remain inactive for 15 days or more. These measures help keep sediment from leaving the site and entering the stormwater systems that empty into our streams and rivers. As we enter our main construction season we'd like to remind contractors to be vigilant in inspecting stormwater control measures on a weekly basis and after any rain event of ½ inch or more.

\*Excerpts from 2017 presentation by R. Beck and D. Wolf



Did you know that the #1 stormwater pollutant is sediment? One major source of this sediment in urban areas comes from construction sites. Because of this threat to water quality the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) implemented rules requiring sites that disturb more than one acre to design and utilize a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. According to Doug Wolf and Rob Beck of IDEM there are 5 key elements in a plan\*.

1. Recognition of water resource concerns.
2. Delineation of construction/disturbance limits.
3. Sequence of construction activities.
4. Concentrated flow sediment control measures.
5. Proper implementation of runoff control measures.

## Did you know...

Currently stormwater runoff is not treated before entering our rivers and streams. We must do our part to prevent pollution from entering our waterways and protect aquatic life.

## Rain Garden Funding Still Available



We still have funding available for rain garden installations. Cost-share is available for 75% of all fees up to \$3,000.00 after installation. Rain gardens are a great way to reduce the pollution going into the St. Joseph & Kankakee River Watersheds and add beauty to your yard. Contact us to get an application.

## Rain Barrel Sponsorship

We will be hosting a Rain Barrel Assembly and Information Station at the Purple Porch Co-op Festival on Wednesday, May 30th. This is a part of the City of South Bend's Best Week Ever! We are looking for sponsors to help make this a free event for our community. Each rain barrel sponsorship is \$30. If you would like to sponsor a barrel, or several barrels, for the event, please give us a call at 574-936-2024 Ext. 4.



**MAY 28 JUNE 3**

## St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership

### National Gardening Week

**Date When Celebrated : First full week of June**

National Gardening Week is a wonderful, week long celebration. National Gardening Week celebrates one of America's most popular hobbies with tens of millions of Americans, young and old alike, growing a garden of some size. This week is a great opportunity to get out into your garden and tend to it, along with enjoying your garden's peacefulness and beauty. Did you know that getting your hands dirty in the garden can increase your serotonin levels? Contact with soil and a



specific soil bacterium, *Mycobacterium vaccae*, triggers the release of serotonin in our brain according to research. Serotonin is a happy chemical, a natural anti-depressant and strengthens the immune system. Lack of serotonin in the brain causes depression. So whether your garden is big or small, get out and enjoy your garden this week.

#### Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Supervisors:

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Mike Burkholder  
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Keith Lineback  
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**Are you ready to "GO GREEN" and help us save money and natural resources? We can deliver your "Conservation Kaleidoscope" newsletter by email ... Give us a call or send us an email and tell us you'd like to "GO GREEN" THANK YOU!!!!**

Scan me to go  
Green!