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## MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

**I. CALL TO ORDER - On Tuesday August 15, 2017, at 7:03 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  
Jeremy Cooper, Vice-Chair/Supervisor  
Mike Burkholder, Supervisor  
Stacey Silvers, Supervisor  
Dave Vandewalle, Supervisor

**PRESENT – SWCD/NRCS**

Debbie Knepp, NRCS DC  
Sarah Longenecker, SWCD CC  
Sandra Hoffarth, SWCD AA

**Present - EX-OFFICIO**

n/a  
**PRESENT – Public**  
David Straughn

**ABSENT – SWCD**

Rick Glassman, SWCD EEC  
Dave Craft  
Jan Ivkovich  
Dru Wrasse  
Richard Schmidt  
Randy Matthys  
Dale Stoner  
Arlene Schuchman  
Chuck Lehman  
Jim LaFree  
Carole Riewe

**II. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA**

**III. REGULAR BUSINESS**

- a. **Legislative Updates** – n/a
- b. **Indiana Conservation Partnership Updates** – IASWCD is seeking volunteers for 3 committees, SWCD Staffing Task Force, SWCD Long-Term Funding Task Force & Natural Resource Policy Committee (advisory). Descriptions are attached. Jane Hardisty (IN NRCS State Conservationist) sent a letter (attached) explaining the removal of the requirement for NRCS District Conservationists to attend board meetings.
- c. **Minutes: June 20, 2017 board meeting** – Minutes were reviewed and approved as presented.
- d. **Treasurer’s Report: (6/21/2017-8/15/2017)** – The treasurer’s reports was reviewed and approved as submitted.
- e. **Approval of Claims (7/19/17-8/15/2017)** –A motion (Cooper, Vandewalle) was made to approve Claim Nos. 11244-11247 for a total of \$253.10 as presented. Motion carried.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

- a. **St. Joseph Co. Soil & Water Conservation Partnership Staff Written Reports**
  - i. **Field Office & Education Reports**– The field office & Education reports were presented to the board & reviewed. (Attached).
  - ii. **NRCS Talking Points** - Knepp went over the NRCS DC talking points (attached).
- b. **Committee Reports**
  - i. **Annual Meeting** – Vandewalle informed the board the 2018 meeting will be held again at St. Hedwig on January 26, 2018. The committee is taking recommendations for entertainment and/or speakers. Ticket price will remain the same at \$15 each. More details to come in the coming months.
  - ii. **Election** – Burkholder is needing two people to join him on the election committee. Please contact Burkholder if you are interested.
  - iii. **Marketing (Annual Report Style)** – the committee recommends that because of cost and ability to reach more readers, we keep the annual report style as a newsletter instead of the calendar. The board agreed.
  - iv. **Rural Conservation/Grant** – Producer Meeting update – Longenecker updated the board on the 2018 tri county Producers Meeting which will be held on February 15, 2018 at Christos Banquet Center in Plymouth, IN. The key note speaker will be Barry Fisher. Starke County SWCD is the lead county.
  - v. **Education** – Burkholder informed the board that the augmented reality sandbox created in conjunction with Marshall County SWCD is up and running. The only remaining item that still needs to be purchased is a cart to transport and place the box on during the demonstrations. The committee recommends releasing \$150 to purchase a cart through Grainger Supply. A motion (Burkholder, Cooper) was made and carried.
- c. **NRCS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** – Knepp passed around a copy of our current MOU and asked if anyone has questions to let her know.
- d. **Locally Led Meeting** – The board decided to hold the FY2018 Locally led meeting on September 19<sup>th</sup> at 6pm before our regular monthly board meeting.
- e. **County Budget meeting recap** – Cooper informed the board that for FY2018 there will again be no raises for county employees. He asks that we keep doing the leveraging sheet along with our yearly highlights. This is an

easy way to explain in a short amount of time what the district is accomplishing in the county. This will also help in future years when raises can be achieved.

**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.
  - i. **IDEA Fall Conference** – Hoffarth is requesting the release of \$350 to cover lodging and registration for the upcoming conference. She feels this is a very good networking opportunity as well as having good breakout sessions. A motion (Cooper, Silvers) was made to release the funds. Motion passed.
- b. **Emergency Watershed Program** – Knepp explained the USDA Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) (flyer attached). Congress established the EWP program that provides funding for recovery projects following a variety of natural disasters.

**VI. PRIVILEGE OF FLOOR – N/A**

**VII. ADJOURNMENT – The board meeting adjourned at 7:57 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](http://www.stjosephswcd.org)


**Approved by:**

  
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Supervisor

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor

  
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Supervisor

  
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Supervisor

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Supervisor

## **IASWCD Natural Resources Policy Committee (Advisory)**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Natural Resources Policy Committee is to serve the IASWCD Board and its local Districts in an advisory role in the formation of state and national natural resource policy.

### **Members**

- SWCD staff, supervisors and associates are eligible
- Agency and other organization staff may serve in an advisory role
- A Chair must be appointed by the committee

### **Responsibilities**

- Identify and prioritize natural resource policy issues
- Gain consensus on appropriate policy options
- Forward recommendations to the IASWCD Board along with suggested actions
- Develop resolutions to be considered by the full delegate body at Annual Conference
- Determine relevance of existing policy items on natural resource issues
- Follow-through on action items assigned to committee by Board
- Chair provides regular written reports for inclusion in consent agendas for Board meetings
- Chair asks for issues to be placed on Board meeting agendas as necessary

### **Authority**

- Committee submits its recommendations to the Board for approval
- Responsible for carrying out needed actions after Board approval
- Board approval can take place outside of a scheduled meeting (via teleconference or email)

### **Results expected**

- Board and its members are kept current on natural resource policy issues as they pertain to soil and water conservation districts
- IASWCD natural resource policies are kept current and in-line with mission of organization and local SWCDs
- IASWCD is viewed as a credible and reliable source of natural resource policy information

## SWCD Long-Term Funding Task Force

**Purpose:** To strategize potential new or existing ways of funding soil and water conservation districts (looking at state funding and other options for Clean Water Indiana program) into the future. **Why?** Because the dedicated Cigarette Tax fund has been declining by about 3-4% each year over the last 7 years. Over \$800,000 has been lost since 2006. A general fund appropriation of \$1 million/year has been secured since 2012; however, this funding is not automatic and is subject to the approval by the Office of Management and Budget. A more secure dedicated funding source is needed to maintain sustainability of the local soil and water conservation districts.

**History:** In 2014, a funding task force was set up and met a few times. A number of ideas were discussed, and that information is available; however, no further action was taken. During the March 17, 2017 IASWCD Board meeting, the board members prioritized opportunities to pursue for the next two years. The number one priority was reestablishment of the funding task force. Clear directions and outcomes are described below to help guide the process.

### **Outcomes desired:**

- Development of a task force represented by local SWCD supervisors and staff along with partners who value the work of the Clean Water Indiana program.
- Narrowing down and vetting of potential strategies that are then presented to the IASWCD Board for consideration and final decision regarding strategy to pursue.
- Development of a work plan to implement the strategy.
- Have Strategy in place for 2019 Legislative Session (2020/2021 budget cycle) with a bill/author.
- Development of a legislative/communication strategy for the 2019 Legislative Session (this may be in conjunction with Legislative Committee).
- Successful passage of a new funding source(s); or a path (outline) for continuing momentum if unsuccessful.

**Timeline:** 2017-2019; Implementation may require recruiting new volunteers depending on needs.

**Co-chairs:** Ray Chattin (Knox County) and Marc Roberts (Montgomery County)

**Volunteer needs:** Local SWCD Staff, Supervisors, and Associate Supervisors who are interested and have ideas regarding long-term funding solutions and are willing to put the time in to vet the potential strategies with legislators, partners, and others as needed. Additional partners will be asked to join the task force as needed.

### **Guidelines according to IASWCD internal policy for the Task Force:**

**Purpose:** Similar in purpose to standing committees, ad-hoc/task forces are created in order to carry out a specific objective within a certain amount of time. Typically established on an as-needed basis, allowing greater flexibility in the work of the Board and its individual members.

### **Members**

- Assigned by the full Board (SWCD staff and Supervisors and some partners will be asked to volunteer)

- Should include at least one IASWCD Board member (does not have to be chair of committee)
- Full Board assigns chairperson

#### **Authority**

- Recommendations must be presented to full Board for approval
- Responsible for carrying out actions needed after full Board approval

#### **Communication**

- Chair to provide written reports for consent agendas for Board meetings as needed
- Chair to request items to be placed on agenda for Board meetings as needed

#### **Committee guidelines**

- Call committee meetings as needed
- Develop an agenda, share it ahead of time with members, and schedule important items first
- Use time between meetings to complete individual assignments, such as contacting people or gathering information. Reports can be shared in writing or by e-mail before meetings. Ask members to be prepared.
- Articulate key decisions made at the meetings as well as the conclusions reached and the required next steps.
- Take minutes and record important decisions; send them out to committee members soon after the meeting.

#### **Committee Chair guidelines**

- Develop agenda, placing important items first; share with members at least 2 weeks prior to meeting
- Start and end meetings on time
- Ensure all members of the committee are involved
- Serve as the contact point for all committee members (unless otherwise designated)
- Facilitate a less formal and more productive style of meeting
- Bring in experts for advice as needed
- Allow time for constructive and free discussion and deliberation
- Stay in contact with those members that did not attend a meeting
- Make sure minutes have been sent out to all members soon after the meeting
- Prepare written reports for consent agendas of full Board meetings
- Request items to be placed on agenda of full Board meetings
- Stay in contact with IASWCD staff as appropriate

## SWCD Staffing Task Force

**Purpose:** To develop a standardization of SWCD employee job descriptions, titles, salaries, and training requirements across the state. To develop or model new ways of collaborating and sharing of employees across county boundaries.

**History:** With 92 SWCDs across the state and the majority of SWCD employees serving as county employees, job descriptions, titles, and salaries vary greatly and lack consistency. This can be viewed as a detriment in hiring and retaining good employees.

### **Outcomes desired:**

- Develop a task force represented by local SWCD supervisors, associate supervisors and staff. Additional partners or experts can be added as needed to help fulfill the desired outcomes.
- Develop a standard set of job descriptions and titles for the SWCD positions across the state.
- Develop a set of appropriate salary ranges for the different positions.
- Develop a set of criteria/experience/training needs for the various positions.
- Develop a pilot program with one or more counties to implement the new standardization
- Develop a strategy and communication plan for local SWCDs to present to their individual county leadership on the standardization process.
- Develop models of sharing employees (or other strategies) and pilot as possible.
- Potential development of a strategy to take this standardization statewide.

**Timeline:** 2017-2019; Implementation may require recruiting new volunteers depending on needs.

**Co-chairs:** Kerry Ames (Putnam County) and Jame Krieger (Vermillion County)

**Volunteer needs:** Local SWCD Staff, Supervisors, and Associate Supervisors who are willing to research and develop job descriptions, strategize about models, and help implement pilots and strategies. Additional partners will be asked to join the task force as needed.

### **Guidelines according to IASWCD internal policy for the Task Force:**

**Purpose:** Similar in purpose to standing committees, ad-hoc/task forces are created in order to carry out a specific objective within a certain amount of time. Typically established on an as-needed basis, allowing greater flexibility in the work of the Board and its individual members.

### **Members**

- Assigned by the full Board (SWCD staff and Supervisors and some partners will be asked to volunteer)
- Should include at least one Board member (does not have to be chair of committee)
- Full Board assigns chairperson

**Authority**

- Recommendations must be presented to full Board for approval
- Responsible for carrying out actions needed after full Board approval

**Communication**

- Chair to provide written reports for consent agendas for Board meetings as needed
- Chair to request items to be placed on agenda for Board meetings as needed

**Committee guidelines**

- Call committee meetings as needed
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United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Indiana State Office  
6013 Lakeside Boulevard  
Indianapolis, IN 46278  
317-290-3200

August 8, 2017

Dear Indiana SWCD Supervisors and Staff:

I am writing to share information with you about a recent NRCS decision that concerns the required attendance of district conservationists and other field staff at regular SWCD Board meetings.

District conservationists are responsible for developing and maintaining productive and effective working relationships with the agency's local partners including SWCDs, our closest partner. We share a unique relationship with Indiana's 92 SWCDs because it is with your help we are able to carry out our work through a memorandum of understanding with the Secretary of Agriculture and you.

In the past, district conservationists have been required to attend SWCD Board meetings and other functions as part of their normal job duties. We believe this is an important role for them to serve as the agency's liaison and technical advisor to your Board. We rely on NRCS field staff to share local resource conservation needs and information with you, including collaborative opportunities about NRCS programs and initiatives. This exchange of ideas and collaboration is essential for promoting and accomplishing our joint mission of voluntary conservation on private lands.

However, since some of the SWCD Board meetings occur before or after regular duty hours, we realize that by requiring attendance we may have placed an added job-related expectation on some of our district conservationists and other field staff, so we have given this matter careful consideration. As of October 1, 2017, NRCS will no longer require district conservationists other field staff to attend a SWCD Board meeting that occurs before or after regular duty hours. Please note, this decision does not apply to SWCD Board meetings that occur during regular duty hours.

Although we are removing this requirement, I have stressed to all employees that the relationship between NRCS and the local SWCD Boards is critical to the achievement of our joint mission. Therefore, I am continuing to authorize flex time and use of compensatory time as needed when Board meetings are scheduled before or after their regular duty hours.

I appreciate all you do to make this relationship work at the field office level. It's because of you that Indiana's Conservation Partnership is the strongest in the nation. If you have any questions about this decision, please feel free to contact the area conservationist or me.

Sincerely,

/s/

JANE E. HARDISTY  
State Conservationist

cc: Indiana NRCS Leadership Team  
Jennifer Boyle Warner, Executive Director, IASWCD  
Jamie Scott, President, IASWCD  
Robert Woodling, Chair, Indiana State Soil Conservation Board

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## **Field Office Report**

### **June 19 – August 11, 2017**

#### Environmental Quality Incentive Program

- Deliver engineering plans for 1 rock lined grassed waterway and 1 structure to landowner
- Deliver engineering plans for Animal Trail and Walkway to landowner
- Cancel pollinator habitat contract due to weather related issues
- Discuss cover crop options with producer - 2
- Develop contract for structure at ditch
- Field inspection and payment processed for .8 ac pollinator habitat
- Obligation letters sent to 14 producers
- Additional 2 applications have been funded. Contacted the producers

#### Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program

- Develop seeding recommendations for 42 acres of pollinator habitat
- Field inspection and payment processed for 30 acs of WSG/pollinator habit
- Land surveyor meeting on new 43 ac site
- Deliver survey post signs
- Site visit to inspect tree planting and Reed canary Grass control. Processed payment.

#### Conservation Stewardship program

- Field verification of cropland application – 1
- Conservation planning/env. Evaluations/verify information/develop maps, conservation plans, job sheets and 6-part folders – 7
- Assist producer with implementation of enhancement
- Process 1 – 2018 re-enroll

#### Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- Deliver grassed waterway/structure plans to landowner
- Deliver engineering plans for 91 acre wetland restoration
- Field visits to review sites – 13
- Develop conservation plans and contracts – 8
- Deliver contract documents to LaPorte FSA for 36 acre wetland restoration
- Work with landowner and contractor on bids and additional funding for grassed waterway

#### Clean Water Indiana Grant

- Develop conservation plan for demonstration area
- Conservation planning field visit - 1

#### Rule 5/Rule 13

- 1 Notice of Termination
- SWPP reviews - 3

#### WNIT tapings

- Highly Erodible Determinations – 3
- Wetlands – 2 determinations
  - 2 reports of potential violations

Assist producer with wetland issues  
Client gateway – connect producer to entity  
Preparation for national Webinar on Conservation Planning (as presenter)  
Provide information to Jennifer Thum for SWCD Business plan

Meetings:  
Staff Meetings – 8  
National Conservation Planning Committee teleconference  
State office teleconference  
Webinar – Soil health in High Residue Disturbance Crops  
    Wetland Tools  
    Louisiana national Planning  
    Thistles  
MSP meeting  
CWI Grant meeting  
NRCS Area meeting  
Diversity day – Working with Amish Communities  
Ethics Training  
Records management Training  
Supervisor’s meeting  
State fair – pathway To Water Quality

Office Closed – July 4

## **Education report**

June 19 – August 11, 2017

Lots of vacation time

1 presentations for Pet Refuge Day Camp – 14 participants

2 presentation for Centre Twp. Library – 75 participants.

Assist Whitley County SWCD’s Conservation Day Camp (Personal Day)

    Nature games and Amphibians/Reptile program – 44 participants.

# DC Talking Points

May, 2017

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## **PALMER AMARANTH LANDOWNER LETTERS**

Palmer amaranth (*Amaranthus palmeri*) is one of the most widespread, troublesome, and economically damaging weeds in the Southeast, and it has now spread to the Midwest. Palmer amaranth arrived in Indiana and can spread in a variety of ways, including livestock feed, manure, machinery, wildlife, and seed mixes for wildlife habitat, cover crops, and other purposes. It is a pigweed and close relative of water hemp that emerges in May and grows through September. This weed is not on the Indiana noxious weed list, but it grows rapidly, is highly competitive, produces over 100,000 seeds per female plant, and is difficult to eradicate. The high seed production of Palmer amaranth increases the risk of it moving into additional crop fields and other lands. Because of the real threat it poses to agriculture, it is important to limit its spread to more areas in Indiana.

NRCS is working with Purdue, the Office of the Indiana State Chemist, Indiana's seed suppliers, USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), and others to take a proactive approach to prevent the introduction of and spread, and to suppress/control Palmer amaranth in Indiana. Participants of NRCS-administered Farm Bill programs with conservation plantings that were installed in 2016, or are planned to be installed in 2017, were sent a joint agency letter from FSA and NRCS National Headquarters to educate them about limiting the spread of Palmer amaranth in Indiana. Recipients of the letters have been instructed to monitor 2016 plantings for Palmer amaranth and if a planting is planned for 2017 to consider testing the seed.

If program participants need additional assistance with identification and control of Palmer amaranth, please refer them to the Purdue University resources below.

- [Purdue University Weed Science Webpage](#)
- [Palmer Amaranth Biology, Identification, and Management \(.pdf\)](#) (WS-51) 11/13
- [Scout And Identify Pigweed Species Now \(.pdf\)](#) 3/12
- [Newly Emerging Palmer Amaranth \(.pdf\)](#) 5/14
- Identifying Palmer Amaranth in the Field – [YouTube Video](#)
- Palmer Amaranth Seedling ID - [YouTube Video](#)
- Palmer Amaranth Time-Lapse, Early Growth - [YouTube Video: Early Palmer Growth](#)
- Palmer Amaranth Time-Lapse, Late Growth - [YouTube Video: Late Palmer Growth](#)

## **LIVESTOCK SAFETY ISSUES**

With several states reporting cases of low- and/or high-pathogenic avian influenza this season, the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) is receiving inquiries about the status of the disease. No illness or mortalities in domestic poultry in the U.S. have been reported. It appears to be one of the strains seen during the outbreak in 2014 and 2015 and serves as a reminder that there is still HPAI circulating in wild birds, and producers need to continue to be vigilant about biosecurity to protect domestic poultry. NRCS employees have been reminded of the need to continue to follow biosecurity protocols regarding visits to livestock farms.

- Until further notice, Level 2 Biosecurity measures must be implemented on all poultry production facilities and fields where litter has been applied within the last six months. NRCS employees will call ahead to confirm if there are any specific biosecurity instructions at that farm, wear boots, and disinfect equipment after field visits to sites associated with poultry.



- NRCS employees will call and ask producers prior to field visits if they have poultry, litter onsite, or if litter applications have been made if not readily known (e.g., backyard flock or poultry litter spread or stored on-site), and adhere to the producer's decision of whether or not to allow access to NRCS employees.
- The Indiana Board of Animal Health recently announced that a case of Bovine Tuberculosis has been linked to an Indiana farm. Policy requires NRCS employees to implement Level 1 Biosecurity measures during all livestock farm visits – it is anticipated that adhering to this policy will suffice to limit the potential spread of this recent threat.

Here are some additional reminders and updates from BOAH:

- Indiana has had NO CASES of avian influenza to date this year.
- BOAH continues to maintain the HPAI webpage with current information about the disease in Indiana. That may be found online at: [www.in.gov/boah/2390.htm](http://www.in.gov/boah/2390.htm)
- To help poultry owners stay up-to-date with what is happening nationally, BOAH has added a section to that page that lists links to other states with reported cases this year. That may be found online at: [www.in.gov/boah/2815.htm](http://www.in.gov/boah/2815.htm)
- BOAH continues to offer a poultry-focused Facebook page to provide updates: [www.facebook.com/INAvianHealth/](http://www.facebook.com/INAvianHealth/)
- Poultry owners are encouraged to practice good biosecurity and report ill or dead poultry to the Healthy Birds Hotline at: 866-536-7593

#### **SECOND YEAR CONSERVATION EFFECTS ASSESSMENT PROJECT (CEAP) SURVEY**

Data collection by the NRCS field staff continues and is to be completed by May 12, 2017. If anyone has questions regarding the CEAP data collection, they should contact Rick Neilson at [rick.neilson@in.usda.gov](mailto:rick.neilson@in.usda.gov) or at 317-295-5875. You can visit [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Conservation\\_Effects\\_Assessment\\_Project/index.php](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Conservation_Effects_Assessment_Project/index.php) for additional information about the NRI-CEAP survey process.

#### **NUMBERS TO KEEP HANDY**

- Office of the Indiana State Chemist Pesticide and Fertilizer Complaint Investigation: 800-893-6637
  - For questions about pesticide including aerial application, synthetic fertilizer and manure sold by a livestock facility, herbicides, etc.
- IDEM Emergency Response, Spill Reporting: 888-233-7745
  - To report spills and other emergencies related to chemicals, Fuel, Manure directly from a livestock facility.



# DC Talking Points

June, 2017

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## **USDA REORGANIZATION**

USDA Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue has announced his plans to reorganize USDA in order to improve the effectiveness of USDA efforts to meet the needs of agricultural and forest managers and demonstrate increased accountability to the American taxpayer.

The plan proposes to move NRCS, FSA, and RMA, under a new Farm Production and Conservation mission area, which will focus on domestic agricultural issues and provide a simplified one-stop shop for USDA's primary customers, the men and women farming, ranching, and woodland management. In addition, the Secretary proposes adding an Undersecretary of Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs. The Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment will retain supervision of the U.S. Forest Service. Rural Development will be moved directly under the Secretary.

A reduction in USDA workforce is not part of the reorganization plan and we do not anticipate any changes in how we do business here in Indiana.

USDA's report detailing the reorganization can be found at:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/report-proposed-2017-reorg-usda-under-secretary-trade-foreign-agricultural-affairs.pdf>. The public may comment on the reorganization plan by visiting this page hosted by the White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/reorganizing-the-executive-branch>

## **EQIP SIGN-UP STATUS AND ADDITIONAL FUND REQUEST**

Indiana NRCS staff are in the process of obligating EQIP dollars for the Fiscal Year 2017 sign-up. For 2017, Indiana received an allocation of \$20 million dollars to fund EQIP applications. At this point we anticipate obligating the full allocation amount (\$20 million) to fund 1,026 contracts. Indiana has requested additional EQIP dollars to be used yet this year to fund the backlog of unfunded 2017 requests. National headquarters will evaluate our request and we anticipate notification in mid to late June.

## **FALL TRANSECT RESULTS and SPRING TRANSECT DATES SET**

According to the 2016 Fall Transect Report, Hoosier farmers planted over a million acres of cover crops for the second year in a row. These numbers surprised many considering the current economy. In addition to cover crops, the Transect also gathers information about tillage methods and residue. Results for residues and soil undisturbed on harvested acres during the winter months include:

- 67 percent of soybean acres
- 58 percent of corn acres
- 50 percent of small grain acres
- 31 percent of specialty crop acres

The ICP is currently planning their bi-annual spring tillage transect to help determine whether covers were unharvested or harvested small grains such as wheat. Estimates of spring tillage and verification of the cover crops planted last fall will be available later this summer.

The transect is a collaborative effort between the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Indiana's 92 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), Earth Team Volunteers and other members of the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP). ISDA maintains tillage transect



reports dating back to 1990 on their website at <http://www.in.gov/isda/2383.htm> and includes the most recent transect results.

#### **OFFSITE WETLAND DETERMINATION PROCESS UPDATE**

In FY17, Indiana NRCS began using the offsite wetland determination process on a routine basis. Although we have had the ability to make offsite determinations for quite a while, recent updates to our map products and documentation, along with the use of Lidar data have greatly increased our confidence level in the process. Staff still make site visits where the offsite data may be inconclusive for any particular situation, as well as for reconsiderations and appeals.

All wetland determinations, regardless of whether they were done offsite or onsite, are now mapped (or digitized) in a secure statewide database for future reference. The standardized mapping procedures were an added step to the process to centralize records and improve the map products that go with a determination.

Thanks to significant automation within the data and map making process, the time needed to complete determinations has been greatly reduced from an average of eight hours per determination to an average of two hours.



# DC Talking Points

August, 2017

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## USDA TOP POSITION NOMINATIONS

**Deputy Secretary** - Stephen L. Censky has been nominated to serve as the new USDA Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. Mr. Censky is the American Soybean Association's (ASA) Chief Executive Officer. As ASA's top executive, Censky is in charge of managing ASA's legislative, trade policy, international market development, communications, and leadership development programs. Originally from Missouri, Censky was a corn/soybean farmer and worked with USDA on the 1990 Farm Bill.

**Undersecretary for Trade and Foreign Agriculture Affairs** - Indiana's State Department of Agriculture Director Ted McKinney has been selected as the new Undersecretary for Trade and Foreign Agriculture Affairs. The position that McKinney will assume is a newly created post as part of USDA's reorganization. McKinney has been director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture since 2014. His international experience comes from serving with Elanco Animal Health and Dow AgroSciences as communications director. McKinney was raised on an Indiana farm and is a Purdue alumni. USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue said, "For our new undersecretary position emphasizing international trade, I have always said that I want someone who wakes up every morning asking how we can sell more American agricultural products in foreign markets. Ted McKinney is that person."

## EQIP SIGN-UP STATUS AND ADDITIONAL FUND REQUEST

Indiana NRCS staff has processed for obligation 1,060 applications for the EQIP Program. The obligation of these contracts uses the original allocation of \$20 million dollars that Indiana received for EQIP. Indiana has requested an additional \$1.1 million dollars for the EQIP program. National Headquarters has approved this funding and Indiana will receive those dollars. The approximate distribution of the additional funds will be as follows: \$850,000 for EQIP General, \$150,000 for EQIP-WLEB and \$150,000 for EQIP-Joint Chief's Initiative (Forestry). Area Staff will be notified when the funds are available for use.

## NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLANNING PARTNERSHIP WEBINARS

The National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCPP) has developed a strategy that ensures partnership field staff have the right expertise, are stationed in the right locations, and have enough time to work one-on-one with our diverse customer base. The NCPP is introducing a new peer-to-peer web conference series to support conservation planning staff and partners. Each month, a new state will host a conversation focused on hot topics and creative solutions surrounding nationwide efforts to put conservation planning first.

The NCPP strongly supports the concept of providing consistent training throughout the country, not only the required certification training that planners will need to attain or maintain their status, but also opportunities such as this series of webinars for the entire conservation partnership. In this peer-to-peer series you will hear from those states, district conservationists, conservation districts, resource conservationists, and others in various geographical areas that are doing a good job or have wisdom to share.

This series of online workshops, along with an upcoming series of podcasts will be recorded for those that cannot attend the live workshop. Below is a tentative schedule for upcoming online interactive workshops – topics will be announced later on. All workshops will be held at 1:00 p.m. (eastern)



July 25 – Louisiana

Aug 22 – Indiana (Indiana’s Deb Knepp and Jennifer Kipper will be the guest speakers, along with Shannon Zezula)

Sep 26 – South Dakota

Oct 24 – Oregon

Nov 28 – Maine

Dec 19 – New York

### **PATHWAY TO WATER QUALITY 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

Pathway to Water Quality would not be the premiere water quality exhibit in the country without the work and perseverance the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP) staff have put into it. Our celebration will be complete if you can join us! Join Pathway to Water Quality's Steering Committee, members of the ICP, Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch, Indiana State Fair officials and others on Friday, August 4, at 9:30 a.m. We will celebrate 25 years of conservation education as we dedicate the green roof gazebo, the newest conservation practice on display at PWQ. The celebration will be held at the entrance to Pathway in front of the Green Roof gazebo.

### **NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY DATA COLLECTION**

The latest NRI data collection cycle will begin on July 10th and will run through November. Field offices could receive questions from the NRI Data collectors during that time period. Any assistance the field office staffs can provide to the collectors would be greatly appreciated. Questions from the field should be directed to Rick Neilson, Assistant State Soil Scientist at [rick.neilson@in.usda.gov](mailto:rick.neilson@in.usda.gov) or at 317-295-5875.

### **PSS AGREEMENT SURVEY**

In 2016, Indiana NRCS began piloting the opportunity to work with SWCDs to provide administrative and program support services (PSS) to carry out NRCS’ responsibilities for implementing the requirements of the Farm Bill. These services primarily consist of data entry, contract management, preparing files and reports, gathering data, mailing follow up letters, etc. In January of 2017 we expanded this opportunity to SWCDs statewide and added the CRP components. To give us a better idea of how this process is working, NRCS will survey district conservationists and area staff in late July and early August. Feedback on training needs will be provided to those administering the agreement.

### **FFA VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

The FFA National Convention and Expo will be returning to Indianapolis this year and will run from October 25-28, 2017. As in years past, NRCS will be supporting the Natural Resources and Environment Judging events and is asking for volunteer assistance from partnership staff. Please see the volunteer opportunities below.

#### **Natural Resources and Environment Judging Event Volunteer**

The purpose of the environmental and natural resource career development event is to foster student interest and promote environmental and natural resource instruction in the agricultural education curriculum.

This event will take place on October 25<sup>th</sup> at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. Judges are separated into two categories: verbal and teamwork. All volunteers should report to the fairgrounds at 10:00 AM for orientation and will be released of their duties at approximately 3:00 PM. Lunch will be provided for all volunteers.

#### ***Verbal Judging:***

Students will be provided a scenario that addresses an environmental/natural resource problem from soils, water, ecosystems and waste management. Teams are required to develop a statement that addresses the





questions in the scenario and give an oral presentation justifying the decisions made by the team. Each team will have eight minutes to make their presentation. There will be an additional five minutes given to each team to address questions from the judges. We need approximately 45 volunteers for verbal judging.

**Teamwork Judging:**

While the students are preparing their oral presentations, a group of 12 judges will evaluate how well the team members work together to develop their statement and presentation. Judging will be based on the following areas:

- Managing team dynamics
- Awareness of personality styles of others
- Using positive and mature language and mannerisms
- Reacting to changes
- Handling tasks

If you would like to volunteer for one of these events, please contact Kris Vance at: [kris.vance@in.usda.gov](mailto:kris.vance@in.usda.gov).

**RIVER FRIENDLY FARMER WINNERS**

This year's River Friendly Farmer winners will be honored at the Indiana State Fair August 16 at 1:00 p.m. in the 4-H Exhibit Hall. The list of 2017 River Friendly Farmers and their counties is available on the IASWCD website/RFF page here: <http://wordpress.iaswcd.org/river-friendly-farmer-award/> There, the list can be viewed on the site page or click to a link for a pdf version.



NRCS is looking for ICP help in judging the FFA Natural Resources and Environment events in Indianapolis October 25. We have close to 60 judging slots to fill. We would appreciate it if you could share this opportunity with your staff in central Indiana and encourage participation.

If you would like to volunteer for one of these events, please contact Kris Vance at: [kris.vance@in.usda.gov](mailto:kris.vance@in.usda.gov).

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## Emergency Watershed Protection Program



Help in the midst of **DISASTER**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help communities recover from the devastation that can occur following a variety of natural disasters.

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program is available to communities whenever a natural disaster occurs and creates a sudden watershed impairment that poses a threat to life and/or property. A watershed impairment exists when the ability of a watershed to carry out its normal function is reduced to the extent of creating an imminent threat to life or property.

### Disaster Assistance

Programs and services available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service



### Background Information about the Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Congress established the EWP program and provides funding for recovery projects. Eligibility for the program does not depend upon a presidentially declared emergency, each NRCS State Conservationist is authorized to declare a "Local Disaster" emergency. A local disaster declaration triggers the same assistance from NRCS that would be available through a presidentially declared disaster.

All EWP projects must reduce threats to lives and property; be economically, environmentally, and socially defensible; be designed and implemented according to sound technical standards; and conserve natural resources.

### Watershed Impairments

After a watershed has been dramatically effected by a natural disaster to the point where the watershed no longer functions normally, EWP assistance might be available. The typical aftermath left behind following a flood, fire, hurricane, drought, landslide or tornado can be assisted toward recovery through the EWP program.



Property damage due to flood.

The EWP program addresses watershed impairments, which include, but are not limited to:

- Debris-clogged river and stream channels,
- Undermined, unstable river and stream banks,
- Jeopardized water control structures and public infrastructures,
- Wind-borne debris removal, and
- Damaged upland watersheds stripped of protective vegetation by fire or drought.

### Sponsors

All projects undertaken through EWP, with the exception of the purchase of floodplain easements, must have a project sponsor. A project sponsor is a legal subdivision of the state, such as a city, town, county, parishes, townships, or soil and water conservation districts and when chartered under state laws, entities such as levee districts, irrigation districts, drainage districts and any Native American tribe or tribal organization. In order to be eligible, a sponsor must have taxing and imminent domain authorities and is required to complete the following:

- Secure all necessary permits and land rights
- Furnish the local cost share,
- Accomplish the installation of work, and
- Perform any necessary operation and maintenance.

### Cost Share

Through EWP program, the NRCS may pay up to seventy-five percent (75%) of the construction costs of eligible recovery projects. Ninety percent (90%) may be paid for projects within limited-resource areas as identified by U.S. Census data. The remaining project costs must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services and materials, however they cannot be resources or funding from other federal agencies.

### Eligibility

NRCS conducts a site assessment that provides a case-by-case investigation of the work necessary to repair or protect a site. The individual site assessment documents EWP program eligibility. It is important to note NRCS will only provide funding for work that is necessary to reduce applicable threats. If the threat cannot be removed, NRCS is prohibited from providing assistance.



### Floodplain Easement Program (FPE)

The Emergency Watershed Protection - Floodplain Easement Program (EWP-FPE) provides an alternative measure to traditional EWP recovery, where it is determined that acquiring an easement in lieu of recovery measures is the more economical and prudent approach to reducing a threat to life or property.

The easement area will be restored to the maximum extent practicable to its natural condition. Restoration utilizes structural and nonstructural practices to restore the flood storage and flow, erosion control, and improve the practical management of the easement.

Floodplain easements restore, protect, maintain and enhance the functions of floodplains while conserving their natural values such as fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention and ground water recharge as well as safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and erosion. Structures, including buildings, within the floodplain easement must be demolished and removed, or relocated outside the 100-year floodplain or dam breach inundation area.



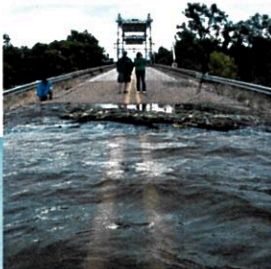
Wildfire Devastation

### Contact Information

If your land has suffered damage due to flood, fire, drought, windstorm, or other natural occurrence, please contact your local NRCS office to find out if you qualify for the EWP program.

Contact Name  
Office Address 1  
Office Address 2  
Contact phone  
Contact email

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp)



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