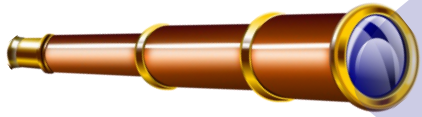


# Conservation



# Kaleidoscope



## Meet the Goats of Invasive Species Management!

When it comes to managing invasive plants, there are several methods out there that a landowner can use. Sometimes, though, figuring out where to start can be daunting. However, there is one tool that can help you get started if you don't mind their hooves.

"We gotta bring in the goats," said St. Joseph County resident, Marcia Nolan. Nolan and her neighbor each own one-half of an empty lot between their properties that is full of invasive plants. After reaching an agreement on having the goats on the whole lot, Nolan reached out to a local farm who had done their 'Goats on the Go' program with T.K. Lawless Park in Cass County, MI. According to Nolan, the farm hadn't done a residential area before, but they were willing to give it a shot.



"We worried about the neighbors being worried [with the smell and the noise] but everyone has been excited!" Nolan smiled.

As we walked the enclosure with her, some of the neighborhood children joined us to get a closer look at the goats at work. There were about 20 goats in total, all munching along on the vegetation in their temporary paddock. Nolan pointed out to a clearly nibbled on maple sapling.



"The goats eat what they like first," is what Nolan had been told by the farmers. The goats continued to move around, munching on the invasive plants that Nolan was hoping to have them tackle. Wintercreeper, Periwinkle, and Asian Bush Honeysuckle was found all over the empty lot. As we continued talked about the goats, we watched as they started their attack on an invasive Asian Bush Honeysuckle, stripping the lower branches of their leaves and snapping off branches.

Invasive species, according to the National Invasive Species Information Center (NISIC), are organisms that are non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Invasive plants can quickly take over an ecosystem, displacing native plants that our native wildlife rely on for survival. There are no normal sets of checks and balances to keep their populations under control when they are outside of their native range. This means it's up to us to manage them and remove them from environments they are not native to.

"The big key is what we do after they leave," Nolan said. "[The goats] make it easier to see what you have and then dig it out. It makes it easier to come in and cut [everything out]."

Nolan was enthusiastic about the next steps to get the invasive plants removed from her yard and was considering having the goats come back if more work needed to be done.

It's a win-win for everyone! For me, the goats, and the farmer!"



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## New Conservation Record Set By Hoosier Farmers



*INDIANAPOLIS, July 26, 2023* - According to a recent conservation survey, Indiana farmers have set a conservation record this year by planting an estimated 1.6 million acres of overwinter living covers.

"Protecting our most vital natural resources is top of mind for our Indiana farmers and this year's record breaking cover crop acreage is a testament to that," said Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development. "Through the implementation of cover crops and other conservation efforts, farmers are ensuring our land and water resources remain healthy and productive."

Overwintering living covers (ie. cover crops and small grains, like winter wheat) are known for their environmental benefits.

Cover crops and small grains, planted in the fall after harvest, help increase organic matter in the soil and improve overall health by adding living roots to the soil for additional months of the year. Cover crops also improve water infiltration into the soil, while other covers, like legumes, serve as natural fertilizers.

Although the conservation transect does not differentiate between cover crops and small grains, Indiana farmers typically plant fewer than 200,000 acres of small grains annually, so cover crops vastly dominate the 1.6 million estimated acres. Apart from corn and soybeans, cover crops are planted on more acres than any other commodity crop in Indiana.

"Hoosier farmers have held strong at 1.5 million acres of cover crops planted since 2021, so we are excited our farmers were once again able to move the needle forward," said Don Lamb, Indiana State Department of Agriculture Director. "Soil conservation successes would not be possible without the dedicated farmers and the Indiana Conservation Partnership to help them along the way."

As a result of the cover crops planted, it is estimated that 1.7 million tons of sediment was prevented from entering Indiana's waterways, which is enough sediment to fill more than 480 Olympic-size swimming pools. Overwintering covers also prevented 4.3 million pounds of nitrogen and over 2.2 million pounds of phosphorus from entering Indiana's waterways.

The conservation survey also showed that about 68% of farmed acres were not tilled and 17% had employed reduced tillage after the 2022 harvest. This early spring survey is not intended to quantify pre-planting tillage.

"Conserving our natural resources is not a one-agency job. Indiana conservation succeeds through its partnerships, working closely with individual farmers and landowners, local, state and federal government agencies, private industries, nonprofits, and many other people and groups," said Curtis Knueven, Acting State Conservationist for Indiana's Natural Resources Conservation Service. "These partnerships share their unique areas of expertise and allow us to expand the reach and depth of conservation in Indiana."

The Indiana Conservation Partnership conducts many programs that help encourage private landowners to adopt cover crops as part of their agricultural strategy. One such initiative that helped contribute to the successful year for cover crops in 2022 was the Cover Crop Premium Discount Program (CCPDP). It is a program that provides a discount on crop insurance for planting cover crops. CCPDP assisted landowners in planting about 30 thousand acres of cover crops in 2022.

The conservation transect is a visual survey of cropland in the state. It was conducted between March and May 2023 by members of the Indiana Conservation Partnership, including the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Indiana's Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Purdue Extension, as well as Earth Team volunteers, to show more of a complete store of the state's conservation efforts.

For technical assistance about conservation practices, contact us!

## Cover Crop Field Event!

Cover crops provide a myriad of benefits for the health of your soil and crops. While different types of cover crops can help achieve different goals, as a whole, they can give some blanket benefits such as:

- Better soil fertility
- Increased soil organic matter
- Increased soil moisture holding capacity
- Reduced soil erosion
- Reduced nutrient runoff
- Reduced compaction



Are you ready to learn more? We are partnering with Marshall County SWCD to hold a cover crop field event on September 20th. Keep an eye on our website for more details to come.

[www.stjosephswcd.org](http://www.stjosephswcd.org)

Ready to get your feet wet? There is still cost share available to plant cover crops this fall through the SWCD's Clean Water Indiana grant as well as a joint 319 grant for the headwaters Yellow River watershed that can help pay for cover crops and some equipment modification costs. If you are interested, please contact our office at 574-936-2024 ext. 4.



## Rain Barrel Workshop

We held a Rain Barrel Workshop at Unity Gardens last month!

It was a hot day, but Unity Gardens was kind enough to allow us to use their classroom space while Ally gave a talk about the benefits of rain barrels. We then proceeded outside where we assembled our barrels.

Thanks to everyone who attended! We have plans to hold another workshop so watch our website and Facebook to find out when!

## Environmental Education Opportunities



Want to know more about Soil Health? Wondering why Invasive Species are a problem? The St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District provides many educational opportunities throughout the county to learn about these topics and many more.

Our Environmental Education Coordinator, Ally Pudlo, has a variety of programs available for schools, such as field trips, in-school programs, and teacher workshops, or special programs for student organizations. We also have adult education programs and workshops, like our Rain Barrel workshop.

Contact the office or use the QR code to find out more about opportunities for your group!







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

2903 Gary Drive  
Plymouth, IN 46563

**NON PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE PAID  
SOUTH BEND IN  
PERMIT NO. 225**

**Upcoming Events!**

**September**

- 4th - Labor Day - Office Closed
- 9th - Hoosier Riverwatch Basic Training, St. Patrick's Park, South Bend, 8:30 am
- 19th - Board Meeting, Centre Township Library, 7 pm
- 30th - Hoosier Riverwatch Basic Training, Bremen, 8:30 am
- 20th - Cover Crop Field Day, 12 pm

**October**

- 14th - Weed Wrangle, Potato Creek State Park, 10 am
- 17th - Board Meeting, Centre Township Library, 7 pm
- 24th - SMIPP/CISMA Educational Hike, Rum Village, South Bend, 6 pm

**Visit our website & watch Facebook for more information!**

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

**St. Joseph County SWCD Partnership Staff**

- Sarah Longenecker, SWCD
- Ally Pudlo, SWCD
- Misty Sorchevich, SWCD
- Debbie Knepp, NRCS
- Jorge Lozoya, NRCS

**SWCD Honorary Members:**

- Jerry Knepp
- Keith Lineback
- William Millar

**SWCD Supervisors:**

- Chris Matthys, Chairman
- Marty Lappin, Vice Chairman
- Dave Vandewalle
- Sam James
- Joe Gregory

**Farm Service Agency Staff**

- Gideon Nobbe, CED
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- Aldona Martin
- Diane Stichter
- Michael Cuff

**SWCD Associate Supervisors:**

- Dave Craft
- John Doods
- Chuck Lehman
- Randy Matthys
- Richard Schmidt
- Dave Straughn
- Dru Wrasse
- Mike Burkholder

**Go Green!**

Contact us to choose to get your newsletter by email!

