



St. Joseph  
County  
Soil & Water  
Conservation  
District



**Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future**

January/February 2017  
Volume 19, Issue 1

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### What's Going On...

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

#### January

- 2nd - New Year's Day  
Observed - Office Closed
- 16th - Martin Luther King Jr's  
Birthday - Office Closed
- 17th - Monthly Board Meeting  
Open to the Public 9AM -  
**LOCATION: Farm Credit  
Services 5310 S Main St,  
South Bend, IN 46614.**
- 20th - EQIP & RCPP  
Applications are due
- 23rd-24th - IASWCD Annual  
Conference

#### February

- 3rd - CSP Applications Due
- 10th - 57th Annual Meeting --->
- 20th - George Washington's  
Birthday - Office Closed
- 21st - Monthly Board Meeting  
Open to the Public 9AM -  
**LOCATION: Farm Credit  
Services 5310 S Main St,  
South Bend, IN 46614.**
- 28th - Farming for the Future  
St. Joseph, Marshall & Starke  
County SWCD's hosting a  
joint workshop. See page 4.

#### March

- 12th - Daylight saving time  
begins. Don't forget to  
move your clocks forward.
- 21st - Monthly Board Meeting  
Open to the Public 6:30 PM  
**LOCATION: Butterfly  
Room Centre Township  
Library at Kern and Miami  
Roads in South Bend - 1150  
Kern Road South Bend, IN  
46614**

## 57th Annual Meeting

It has been a busy year so join us to celebrate all of our 2016 accomplishments.

**Where:** St. Hedwig Memorial Center (331 S Scott St., South Bend, IN 46601)

**When:** February 10, 2017.

**Time:** Doors open at 5:45 pm and the call to order is at 6:30 pm.

**Cost:** Tickets are \$15 each.

**Entertainment:** John Glenn High School's Show Choir.

We will enjoy a family style Polish dinner and have our ever popular silent auction. The evening will also include board supervisor election and awards ceremony.

Call the office for more details or to order your tickets! 574-936-2024 Ext. 4.

You can also visit our website to register:  
[www.stjosephswcd.org](http://www.stjosephswcd.org)



## Silent Auction Donation Form

Each item being auctioned will be displayed along with the name of the donating individual, business, or organization. You may provide a business card to attach to each item if you wish. We ask that each auction item have a retail value of at least \$10.

**Item(s) Submission Deadline: 2/3/2017**

If you have questions about the Silent Auction or would like more information, call the St. Joseph County SWCD Office Staff at 574.936.2024 x4

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Company/Organization Name (If applicable)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Contact Person**

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City/State/Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Donated Item & Short Description of Item or Service:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Retail Value \$:** \_\_\_\_\_

# You Can Help Fight the Gulf of Mexico's "Dead Zone"

Indiana is part of the fertile corn belt of the Midwest. But what is done on this farm ground can have a devastating affect on the Gulf of Mexico. But scientists are studying new ways to lessen the Midwest's environmental impact and improve water quality.

The Mississippi River basin drains approximately 41% of the land area of the continental United States, ranging as far west as Idaho, north to Canada, and east to Massachusetts. For us here in St. Joseph County, all the properties in the Kankakee River watershed affect the Gulf of Mexico. The Kankakee River starts approximately 5 miles southwest of South Bend and winds it's way towards the Illinois River, approximately 50 miles southwest of Chicago, which is a principal tributary of the Mississippi River.

The Mississippi River dumps massive amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus into the Gulf, which feeds algal blooms. When the algae die and drift to the bottom, oxygen is sucked out of the water, creating a massive area inhospitable to support most marine life in bottom and near bottom water. It's a condition called hypoxia. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) forecasts the so-called "dead zone" in the Gulf to grow larger than the size of Connecticut, or roughly 6,000 square miles.

Upstream farmers can't just stop using fertilizer and pesticides all together without massive changes in our food system. So, what can you do now to help reduce pollutants from reaching our waterways?



With the help of Clean Water Indiana (CWI), the St Joseph, Marshall, & Starke County SWCD's have a grant to improve water quality by helping producers utilize all aspects of the conservation cropping systems (no-till, cover crops, nutrient management, & filter strips) which will improve soil health, reduce erosion & nutrient runoff in the Kankakee Watershed.

## Cover Crops

Cover crops have the potential to provide multiple benefits in a cropping system. They prevent erosion, improve soil's physical and biological properties, supply nutrients, suppress weeds, improve the availability of soil water, and break pest cycles along with various other benefits. The species of cover crop selected along with its management determine the benefits and returns.

## Nutrient Management

Nutrient Management is defined as the management of the 4R's:

- ◆ Right amount (rate)
- ◆ Right source
- ◆ Right placement (method of application)
- ◆ Right timing of commercial fertilizers, manure, soil amendments, and organic by-products to agricultural landscapes as a source of plant nutrients while protecting local air, soil and water quality.

## No-Till

No-till means planting into last year's crop residue without tilling the soil. The primary benefit of no-till farming is reduced soil erosion and sediment runoff.

## Filter Strips

Vegetative filter strips are land areas of either planted or indigenous vegetation, situated between a potential pollutant-source area and a surface-water body that receives runoff. The term 'buffer strip' is sometimes used interchangeably with filter strip, but filter strip is the preferred usage. Runoff may carry sediment and organic matter, and plant nutrients and pesticides that are either bound to the sediment or dissolved in the water. A properly designed and operating filter strip provides water quality protection by reducing the amount of sediment, organic matter, and some nutrients and pesticides in the runoff at the edge of the field, and before the runoff enters the surface-water body. Filter strips also provide localized erosion protection since the vegetation covers an area of soil that otherwise might have a high erosion potential.

## Cost Share

To reduce nutrient loading within the watershed, our program will offer a cost-share program for new acres for cover crops, no-till, nutrient management & filter strips. If you are interested in learning more or applying for this cost share opportunity contact our office at 574-936-2024 Ext. 4, e-mail us at [info@stjosephswcd.org](mailto:info@stjosephswcd.org) or visit our website at [www.stjosephswcd.org](http://www.stjosephswcd.org).

*See page 3 for opportunities from NRCS*

## NRCS Programs

### Environmental Quality Incentives Programs (EQIP)

This program seeks to enhance and protect water and air quality, conserve ground and surface water, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, and create wildlife habitat. This is done by offering different sets of agricultural practices that producers can implement on their land like No-till, cover crops, seasonal high tunnels, prescribed grazing, forest stand improvement, invasive species management, and many more.

**Application deadline for EQIP & EQIP-RCPP is January 20, 2017.**

### Environmental Quality Incentives Program – Regional Conservation Partnership Program (EQIP-RCPP) *Michigan/Indiana St. Joseph River Watershed Conservation Partnership*

This program works almost exactly like the general EQIP, but it only covers the Michigan/Indiana St. Joseph River Watershed. The focus is the protection and conservation of water resources, including optimizing groundwater use, improving infiltration, and reducing nutrients and sediment while also improving wildlife habitats. Some of the practices promoted by this initiative are cover crops, irrigation water management, no till, mulching, waterways, heavy use areas, and filter strips.

## Indiana NRCS Announces Applications Available for Conservation Stewardship Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Jane Hardisty announced today that Indiana is now accepting applications for enrollment in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the nation's largest conservation program.

NRCS has made several revisions to the program this year to help producers better evaluate their conservation options and the benefits to their operations and natural resources. New methods and software for evaluating applications will help producers see up front why they are or are not meeting stewardship thresholds, and allow them to pick practices and enhancements that work for their conservation objectives. These new tools also allow producers to see potential payment scenarios for conservation early in the process.

"The updated Conservation Stewardship Program provides even more opportunities for conservation and greater flexibility at the local level to prioritize resource concerns and conservation approaches," says Hardisty. "Customized CSP tools for Indiana will improve the customer experience during application evaluations."

**The sign-up runs through February 3, 2017.** Applications are available in local USDA service centers. Producers and other landowners interested in the additional opportunities the updated CSP will offer can



find information on the new CSP portal, located at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/csp](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/csp). This one-stop shop, which provides information to help individuals determine whether CSP is right for

them, will be continually updated as more information becomes available. Changes that producers can expect to see include nearly double the enhancements and conservation practices offered and better reporting tools to tell producers the results of their conservation efforts on their land.

Through CSP, agricultural producers and forest landowners earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, ecologically-based pest management, buffer strips, and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat – all while maintaining active agriculture production on their land. CSP also encourages the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and new management techniques, such as precision agriculture applications, on-site carbon storage and planting for high carbon sequestration rate, and new soil health practices to improve water quality.

Using input from producers and stakeholders, CSP was redesigned to provide more flexibility in helping to address local resource concerns. Now, NRCS will more effectively utilize input from farmers and partners in Indiana's State Technical Committee and local workgroups to inform and expand conservation strategies. Producers will be better prepared to apply because they will know these local ranking priorities and targeted resource concerns in advance.

CSP is for producers who are already established conservation stewards and who want to add more conservation benefits on their land, such as improved water and soil quality and enhanced wildlife habitat. Information about CSP, including national and state ranking questions and enhancement descriptions, is available at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/csp](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/csp).

**For more information about NRCS and other technical and financial assistance available through conservation programs, contact your District Conservationist Debbie Knepp at 574-936-2024 Ext. 4.**



2903 GARY DRIVE  
PLYMOUTH IN 46563

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

## St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership

# Save the Date!



### 2017 Farming for the Future A Tri-County Producers Conference

**When:** Tuesday February 28, 2017 10am-2pm

**Where:** Christos Banquet Center  
830 Lincolnway E, Plymouth, IN 46563

To register or receive more information, call our office 574-936-2024 Ext. 4, email us at [info@stjosephswcd.org](mailto:info@stjosephswcd.org) or visit our website [www.stjosephswcd.org](http://www.stjosephswcd.org).

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