



St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

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What's Going On...

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

November

10th - Veteran's Day - office closed

21st - Monthly Board Meeting - Open to the Public 6:30 PM - LOCATION: Butterfly Room Centre Township Library at Kem and Miami Roads in South Bend - 1150 Kem Road South Bend, IN 46614

23rd - Thanksgiving - office closed

24th - County Holiday

December

7th & 8th - Soil & Water Conservation Society 2017 National Conference on Cover Crops, Indianapolis. See their site for all the details <http://bit.ly/2xLLODO>

15th - EQIP FY18 Application Deadline

19th - Monthly Board Meeting - Open to the Public 9AM - LOCATION: Farm Credit Services 5310 S Main St, South Bend, IN 46614.

25th - Christmas Day - office closed

26th - County Holiday

January

1st - New Year's Day - Office closed

8th & 9th - IASWCD Annual Conference, Indianapolis

15th - Martin Luther King Jr's Birthday - office closed

16th - Monthly Board Meeting - Open to the Public 9AM - LOCATION: Farm Credit Services 5310 S Main St, South Bend, IN 46614.

26th - 58th Annual Meeting see page 3 for details.

Indiana NRCS Announces EQIP Application Deadline

Indianapolis, IN, September 27, 2017 – Indiana's agricultural producers who want to improve natural resources and address concerns on their land are encouraged to sign up for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Jane Hardisty, NRCS State Conservationist, announced that December 15, 2017 will be the EQIP application deadline in Indiana.

"While we take EQIP applications throughout the year, applications received after December 15th will be considered in future announced application rounds. I encourage producers with resource concerns on their land to submit an application by the deadline," Hardisty explains.

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program available for agricultural producers. Through EQIP, NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to install conservation practices that reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, improve soil health, improve water and air quality, and create wildlife habitat.

Many applicants are interested in using funds to address soil erosion and water quality issues on their land; however, funds are also available for pasture and grazing land, confined livestock operations, organic producers, drainage water management, invasive plant control, and wildlife habitat improvement. Also included in this sign up are several state and national initiatives including:

- ◆ National Organic Initiative: NRCS provides financial payments and technical assistance to help producers implement conservation measures in keeping with organic production. Beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged producers may obtain additional assistance.
- ◆ National On-Farm Energy Initiative: NRCS provides agricultural producers with technical and financial

assistance that quantifies how energy can be used more efficiently to reduce input costs, increase productivity and reduce air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. This initiative only offers assistance for 128 Conservation Activity Plans-Ag Energy Management Plans (AgEMPs) and certain energy conservation practices.

- ◆ NRCS Western Lake Erie Basin Initiative (WLEB): NRCS and partners work with producers and landowners to implement voluntary conservation practices that improve water quality, restore wetlands, enhance wildlife habitat and sustain agricultural profitability in the Western Lake Erie basin.
- ◆ Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Initiative (EQIP): The Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project is a multi-state effort focused on increasing monarch habitat on private lands through plantings of milkweed and nectaring forms as well as managing pesticide use in proximity to monarch habitat.
- ◆ Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative (EQIP): The goal of this initiative is to convert tall fescue and other non-native forages to native grasses and forbs and develop prescribed grazing plans to address the habitat needs of bobwhite quail and associated grassland/shrub land species. This category is available statewide on land which overlaps one of the Indiana DNR C.O.R.R.I.D.O.R.S. priority areas.
- ◆ Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI): NRCS and partners work with producers and landowners to implement voluntary conservation practices that improve water quality, restore wetlands, enhance wildlife habitat and sustain agricultural profitability in the Great Lakes.

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NRCS Landscape Conservation efforts:

Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) projects: RCPP promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. NRCS provides assistance to producers through partnership agreements and through the following program contracts or easement agreements.

- ◆ The Michigan/Indiana St. Joseph River Conservation Partnership (Elkhart, LaGrange, Steuben, Noble, Kosciusko, DeKalb and St. Joseph Counties)
- ◆ Improving Working Lands for Monarch Butterflies Partnership (statewide)

In addition, EQIP offers financial assistance for payment of practices and conservation activities involving the development of plans appropriate for the eligible land. The conservation practice associated with plan development is known as a Conservation Activity Plan

(CAP). EQIP applications for CAP are not required to be submitted by December 15th; they may be submitted, accepted and considered for funding at any time. Funding is based on dollars available and meeting eligibility requirements.

Producers interested in EQIP should submit a signed application to the local NRCS field office. Applications submitted by the December 15th deadline will be evaluated for the funding period submitted. Participants in EQIP must meet eligibility requirements. NRCS staff will work with producers to determine eligibility and complete necessary worksheets and rankings in order for the applicant to compete for funding.

For more information about EQIP and other technical and financial assistance available through Indiana NRCS conservation programs, contact St Joseph County's USDA NRCS District Conservationist Debbie Knepp at 574-936-2024 Ext. 4.



Traditionally warm and cool season grasses as well as forbs are seeded in early spring through May when soil temperatures and conditions allow. Dormant seedings, on the other hand, are done from December 1 to March 15 for cool season grasses and from December 1 to February 15 for warm season species. When the soil temperature is 50 degrees Fahrenheit or cooler, the seeds will remain dormant and not germinate until the soil warms up again in the spring.

There are several reasons why dormant seeding may be your best option.

- Dormant seeding is advantageous to areas susceptible to spring flooding or peaty areas that remain wet during the summer.
- Spring seedings occur during a busy time of the year for many producers. Winter seedings, on the other hand, can be made when there is more time for field work.
- If you are dependent on a contractor or farmer who has the proper equipment to make the seeding for you, the winter seeding also provides more time for them to work you into their schedule.

Broadcast seeding of some forage species in late winter is an easy way to plant the seed. This method is quite easy to accomplish on both small lots and large fields. You can use a hand-held, shoulder-held, hand-

cranked broadcaster, a seeder attached to an all terrain vehicle, or a seeder attached to the back of a tractor, whichever is most suitable or available. Be careful not to drill the seed too deep. A good rule of thumb is 1.5 times the diameter of the seed or less. It is far better to plant the seed too shallow than to plant too deeply. Dormant seeding will allow the process of freezing and thawing to work the seed into the ground to the correct depth. A firm seedbed will allow good seed to soil contact and result in good germination and emergence. Seeding into stubble will reduce the chance of seed movement from wind and water erosion. Keep in mind that some of the seeds will die over the winter, so you should increase your seeding rates by 20-30%.

What are the risks involved with dormant seeding?

Seeds will start to germinate as soil warms in the spring and they could be susceptible to damaging spring frosts. If you seed before the soil temperatures are low enough, germination can begin and as decreasing winter temperatures take over the seedlings will die and you will have a poor establishment if any the next spring.

Landowners considering a dormant seeding should contact our office to determine if your conservation plan needs to be modified from spring planting to dormant seeding and to receive technical assistance.

See our website for more articles and job sheets:
www.stjosephswcd.org/dormant-seeding



Experts talk soil health

Written and produced by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service

No-till, cover crops go hand-in-hand to build healthy soils, expert says

Even after 30 years of no-till and cover crop experience, Dwayne Beck, manager of South Dakota State University's Dakota Lakes Research Farm near Pierre, South Dakota says there's still much to learn about mimicking nature. But he says the critical first step is to realize that the soil is living and part of a larger ecosystem.

"The diverse plants of the prairies cycled carbon back to the soil, and that slow, steady return of carbon to the soil boosted soil organic matter which continuously fed billions of microbes," Beck says. "Those microbes, in turn, broke down organic matter, making nutrients available to plants. This cycle produced the high levels of active organic matter in virgin prairie soils that accounted for the astounding yields sobusters enjoyed in past generations."

"In tillage-based systems, mineralization is 'boom and bust.' Booms occur after tillage with busts following shortly after. In contrast, mineralization in no-till soils is more evenly spread over the season," Beck says.

Taken together with intensive rotation, no-till becomes a comprehensive program—there's no need to fall back on occasional tillage, Beck says. "And you don't want to till occasionally, because one year of tillage destroys that environment for microorganisms you've been building for years."

"Once you realize the soil is living, it makes sense that the living organisms in the soil need a balanced diet, just as your livestock [need a balanced diet]," Beck says. "You can't provide that diet with a continuous crop. That's where cover crops and crop rotations come in; they're needed to give that variety of

food to the soil," he says.

Expert: Cover crops key in preventing yield losses when converting to no-till

Most farmers with experience in improving soil health have converted from conventional tillage to no-till farming, then over time, added cover crops into their farm operations.

But many farmers have experienced yield drops, at least in corn, in the transition years to no-till. However, that doesn't have to be the case, and there's no need to master no-till before you use cover crops with no-till, says Jim Hoorman, an assistant professor and Extension educator for Ohio State University.

"No-till corn yields typically lag conventionally tilled fields by as much as 10 to 15 percent for five to seven years until the microbial populations recover in the soil," Hoorman says. "That's because in the transition years, as microbes increase in numbers and build organic matter and humus, the corn crop has competition for nitrogen—microbes take up nitrogen faster than plants, so if nitrogen is limiting, the crop will suffer."

But farmers can shorten – or eliminate – a yield drop in the short term while you're on your way to increasing yields long term by using cover crops from the start with no-till, he says.

"The literature says there are 1,000 to 2,000 times more microbes associated with living roots than in soil without live roots," Hoorman says. "If you want to build soil, you need to leave it undisturbed and keep it covered with living plants as much of the time as practical."

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.

Save the Date!

58th Annual Meeting

When: January 26, 2018

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

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

Cost: Tickets are \$15 each.

Entertainment: TBA

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

Farming for the Future Producers Workshop

When: February 15, 2018

Where: Christo's Banquet Center, 830 Lincoln Hwy East, Plymouth, IN 46563

Time: 9am-2pm (EST)

Cost: TBA

Keynote Speaker: Barry Fisher a 32-year veteran of NRCS and a native Hoosier, is the State Soil Health Specialist for NRCS.

PARP credits available. Cost is \$10 paid at the workshop.



St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership



Ten reasons why Santa Claus could also be a farmer!

1. He works all year, just to give his stuff away.
2. He's good with livestock.
3. He knows how to get by with the same equipment season after season.
4. He works outside, even in bad weather.
5. He's good with kids.
6. His wife is an excellent cook.
7. He could stand to lose a few pounds (see reason #6).
8. He's used to getting in and out of tight places.
9. He covers a lot of ground in a hurry when the pressure is on.
10. He takes care of the needs of the whole world!

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Stacey Silvers
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Scan me to go Green!

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!!!!