St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District

CONSERVATION KALEIDOSCOPE

Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

Jul/Aug/Sep 2002 | 5605 U.S. 31 South, Suite 4 *South Bend, IN * | Telephone (574) 291-2300 Ext. 3 | Editor: Troy Manges
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Calendar of Events

July 4
Independence Day
Office Closed

July 15
SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 – Farm Bureau Mtg. Room

July 27 – August 4
St. Joseph Co. 4-H Fair

August 19
SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 – Farm Bureau Mtg. Room

September 2
Labor Day
Office Closed

September 12 & 13
Riverwatch Training

September 16
SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 – Farm Bureau Mtg. Room

Help Find The

BIGGEST

Trees in
St. Joseph County

For more information call the St. Joseph County SWCD Office At 574-291-2300, ext. 3. Or stop by and pick up an entry form. Entries are due September 1st, 2002.

Riverwatch Training
will be held in Elkhart County on
September 12th & 13th.
For more information or to register
Call Nancy Brown at the
Elkhart Co. SWCD
574-533-3630, ext. 3

What's Inside . . .

COMPOST WORKSHOP

WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 9, 2002
7:00 P.M. - 8:30 P.M.
FARM BUREAU
MEETING ROOM

CALL FOR RESERVATIONS
574-291-2300
EXT. 3

ALL PARTICIPANTS WILL
RECEIVE A
FREE COMPOST BIN

HIGH ICE

Here is an activity that will make kids realize how cool glaciers are.

Place lots of small balloons all over the floor to represent mixed ground surfaces. Line up the children at one end of the floor, and have them advance forward, together kicking the balloons forward and to the sides, acting like a moving glacier. They'll see how glaciers pushed the land forward, forming both terminal and lateral moraines. If some balloons get left behind, that's a great opportunity to discuss glacial erratic's.

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

RECRUITING MEETING

MONDAY
SEPTEMBER 16, 2002
6:30 PM
Farm Bureau Meeting Room
5605 U.S. 31 South
South Bend, IN
46614

574-291-2300 ext. 3

Would you like to become part of the grassroots voice of St. Joseph County conservation? Then join us on September 16 to learn more about the Conservation Partnership and all that we do, and all that you can do.

ROCKS AND ICE GEOLOGY OF OUR COUNTY

St. Joseph County is truly a unique county when it comes to its' geology. We have over 65 different soil types, sand dunes, flat lands and hills. All of this can be credited to just one thing, GLACIERS. Yes, around 15,000 years ago St. Joseph County was covered with ice. Then something amazing happened, the earth began to get warmer (global warming, think about it) and the ice began to melt. The interesting thing about all of this is that some of the lobes of the Wisconsin Glacier actually stopped right here in our county. The glacier is best described as a gigantic bulldozer and it was the glacier that dug Lake Michigan. All of that debris that was pushed by the glacier or had become part of the glacier was then deposited right here. If you have ever taken a drive along Ewing and Dragoon Trail, you have seen the pile of stuff left by the glacier. The material locked in the glacier was washed out and this glacier till and outwash became the parent materials for our diverse soils. A huge river formed that ran straight through our county, but as the glacier retreated a large section broke off and caused a dam across the river. This caused the river to flow north into Lake Michigan creating our present day rivers, the St. Joseph and Kankakee. The Kankakee was a small river in a huge river bed and created the greatest wetland in the world, which we drained to create some of the greatest farmland in the world.

The glacier also caused Lake Michigan's shoreline to vary, which explains why we have sand dunes so far away from the present day lakeshore. So the next time you pick up a rock, you might want to stop and think, where did you really come from?

What have we done for you lately? Your Conservation Partnership

A LITTLE HISTORY

Our story begins with what today is called the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This federal agency was created during the dust bowl years to help place conservation on the land, prevent erosion and improve water quality. The NRCS is the technical branch of the partnership. They design conservation practices from grass waterways to animal waste systems. Created a few years earlier, the Farm Service Agency (FSA, today's name) is the financial branch of the partnership, providing the funding for the conservation practices designed by the NRCS.

The federal government realized that they needed help at the grassroots level to incorporate the conservation practices and the Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) were born. The SWCD is an affiliation of State Government and is run by a 5 person board. Three of these are elected officials and two are appointed by the three. All five take a State Oath of Office. The five elected supervisors rely on the associate supervisors and their committees for direction. It was in 1959 that St. Joseph County started it's SWCD. Part of the memorandum of understanding is that the SWCD would hire a secretary to assist the employees of NRCS.

Discussion of the partnership would not be completed without including the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). Its divisions of Forestry, Fish & Wildlife and Soils all help provide more technical support for the programs of the partnership.

Through the years the roles of each partner have grown ,but today, as in the beginning, it is the NRCS that provides the foundation for the entire partnership. Supported by this foundation, each agency adds a building block of diversity and knowledge creating the house we call the Conservation Partnership.

TODAY'S ROLES

Each agency of the Partnership has definitely grown and expanded their roles in conservation but the underlying goals are still the same. FSA is still the financial support of the partnership.

The NRCS is still the foundation, charged with the administration and implementation of the Farm Bill. The IDNR is still assisting with its knowledge and expertise both rural and urban.

The SWCD is the organization that has probably expanded its role the most of the partnership agencies. Many SWCD's have worked with their local governments to add employees to assist the conservation goals. St. Joseph County has added a County Conservationist (CC) and Environmental Education Coordinator (EEC). The CC job is to assist NRCS employees in getting conservation on the land. The CC helps to design conservation practices and apply these practices. In St. Joseph County the CC also oversees the SWCD tree sales program, which helps provide funding for SWCD programs and for the past 16 years, approximately 40,000 seedlings have been planted in our county. The EEC was hired to help reach the youth and adults of our county with education. School programs from earthworms to Swamp Stomps help students understand their roles and relationships with planet earth. Adult programs, such as, composting and backyard wildlife show ways every resident can do something to help.

The SWCD role has expanded to the urban section of the county. All urban construction of five acres or more must have an erosion plan that is reviewed in our office.

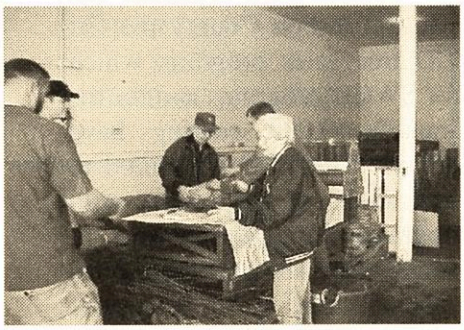
But the largest change in the SWCD is its' voice. The recently passed Farm Bill is the biggest yet. Included are great steps towards conservation. EQIP funding is greater than the past six years combined. CRP and WRP also have had large increases. Our parent organizations, the Indiana Association of SWCD (IASWCD) and National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) have helped provide a voice for all of us and have accomplished great things. The St. Joseph County SWCD has money available, thanks to the work of the IASWCD, for conservation programs that NRCS does not cover. It is this voice that helps put a roof over the conservation partnership's house. It is this voice that helps protect the foundation and the building blocks of conservation. It is this voice that begins the third Monday of every month at your St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation Districts Board meeting.

WOODLAND TIMES

Forestry News Updates for St. Joseph County

Tree Sales Program Helps Get New Trees Into The Community!

This Spring you might have noticed some new trees being planted in yards and fields in the community. The St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to say that approximately 36,500 of those trees are from our 2001 – 2002 Tree Sales Program.



On packaging day at the Matthys Farm, a person can hear "Next order please."

The Tree Sales Program has been very successful over the past sixteen years due to the outstanding conservation attitude of the community and the hard work of volunteers. Our thanks go out to Randy Matthys and Family, Master Gardeners, St. Patrick's County Park, Rum Village Nature Center, Purdue Cooperative Extension Service, Penske Truck Leasing, Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, St. Joseph County 4-H Fairgrounds, Elkhart County SWCD, John Manuszak and the Mishawaka High School Waltonian Club, and John Glenn FFA.

A final question is answered before heading out with her new trees.

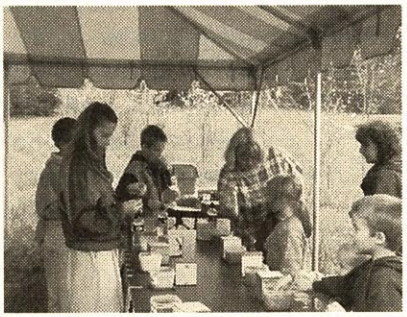
This year we were able to donate trees to three different projects through our Tree Grant Program. The trees will be used for conservation, beautification, and educational practices. This is one of many ways that the money raised from the tree sales program is given back to the community.

2002 Forestry/Warm Season Grass/Wetland Field Day

The 2002 Forestry/Warm Season Grass/Wetland Field Day was held on April 20th. The Field Day was held at Bart Culver's property in Kosciusko County. The field day was very informative and featured speakers such as Chris Egolf – Mature Growth Forestry and Forbes, Tom Crowe – Woodlot Management TSI, Brian MacGowan – Enhancing Wetlands for Amphibians, Bill Minter – Fen, Randy Millar – Warm Season Grasses, Dave Kittaka – Pond

Tom Crowe talking about Woodlot Management.

Management/Aquatic Weed Control, and Nancy Brown coordinated a youth program entitled Exploring Nature. The field day was sponsored by St Joseph, Elkhart, and Kosciusko County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Thanks also goes to Whitley County SWCD, Quail Unlimited, and Pheasants Forever for their help with the field day. Watch the newsletter for information on the 2003 Forestry Field Day.



Nancy and Darci help tomorrow's future Explore Nature.

Windbreaks Improve Environment

Windbreaks and tree plantings slow the wind and provide shelter and food for wildlife. Trees can shelter livestock and crops: they are used as barriers to slow winds that blow across large cropped fields and through farmsteads. An established windbreak slows wind on its downwind side for a distance of 10 times the height of the trees. Farmstead and field windbreaks and tree plantings are key components of a conservation system. They also improve air quality by capturing dust. Planting a mix of tree species helps prevent total losses to disease and severe weather; it also provides food, nesting areas, and cover for a variety of wildlife.

FIELD NOTES

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

President Signs Farm Bill with Conservation Emphasis

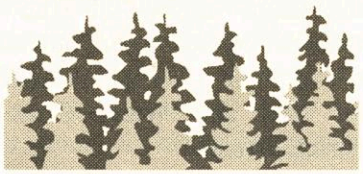
INDIANAPOLIS, May 15, 2002 – President Bush signed the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill) into law on May 13, 2002. At the signing ceremony, President Bush stated, "The Farm Bill will strengthen the farm economy, and that's important. It will promote farmer independence, and preserve the farm way of life for generations."

This Farm Bill represents the single most significant commitment of resources toward conservation on private lands in the Nation's history. The legislation responds to a broad range of emerging natural resource challenges, faced by farmers and ranchers, including soil erosion, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and farmland protection. Private landowners will benefit from a portfolio of voluntary assistance, including cost-share, land rental, incentive payments, and technical assistance. The 2002 Farm Bill places a strong emphasis on the conservation of working lands, ensuring that land remains both healthy and productive.

Indiana's NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty noted, "With the increases in funds for conservation in this Farm Bill, NRCS will be able to address the backlog of landowners waiting for conservation cost-share funds. Landowners will have new opportunities to receive cost share and technical assistance to deal with the environmental and conservation concerns on their farms."

A major difference from past farm bills is the amount of money that will be put into conservation on "working lands"-funds for cost-sharing and technical assistance on croplands, pasturelands, wildlife and forestlands. For example, with this Farm Bill the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds nearly double for this year, and increases of up to five times the current funding are slated for subsequent years of the Bill. Also, EQIP allows up to 90 percent cost-share for beginning or limited resource farmers.

The conservation provisions build upon past conservation gains and respond to the call of farmers and ranchers across the country for additional cost-share resources. The 2002 Farm Bill also ensures greater access to the programs by making more landowners eligible for participation.



"Conservation Choices" Helps Landowners Assess Needs and Options

Thinking about conservation needs on your land? Stop by your Soil and Water Conservation District Office and pick up a copy of "Conservation Choices". This bulletin, recently published by the USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service, is great reading about planning and applying total resource management systems on farmland.

The key to successful total resource management systems is careful, complete planning. Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, each conservation practice fits together with others to complete a picture. But anyone who has put together a jigsaw puzzle knows it takes patience, organization and teamwork to complete the job.

Designing a total resource management plan is the same. It requires considering all the resources on the farm. Think about every field, pasture, stream, pond and wooded area. Then consider which soil conservation, water quality, wildlife habitat, and energy conservation practices will contribute to meeting your environmental and economic goals.

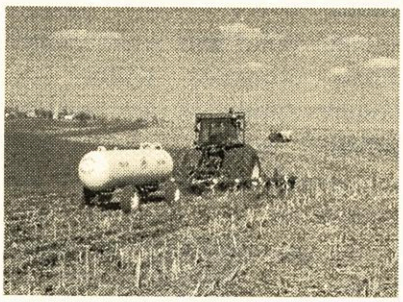
FIELD NOTES

Some of the most profitable practices, like pest or nutrient management, take little or no financial investment and may have the highest impact on water quality. For example, scouting crops, selecting pest control alternatives, and targeting control to problem areas can cut expenses and improve water quality.

The planning process may seem overwhelming at first but the team of agencies assisting the Soil and Water Conservation District are available to be on your planning team.

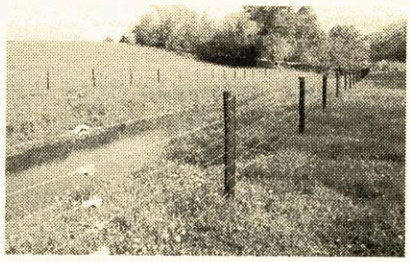
The "Conservation Choices" bulletin describes thirty of the most common conservation practices. It tells how the practice works and how it helps meet the farmer's objectives. The bulletin points out some things you will want to think about for the future and a limited amount of technical information. Finally, a section points out some of the maintenance needs of the conservation practice. It is excellent background information for farmers and those who want to better understand conservation.

Farmers are applying conservation and environmental practices to their land at record rates in Indiana.



Nutrient Management...applying the correct amount and form of plant nutrients for optimum yield and minimum impact on water quality.

They are protecting water resources by scouting fields for pests, establishing buffer zones of vegetation along streams and creeks, and storing animal manure until conditions are right for field application. They are saving soil by leaving more residues on crop fields, constructing grass waterways, building terraces, and farming on the contour.



Stream Protection...protecting a stream by excluding livestock & by establishing buffer zones of vegetation to filter runoff.

Farmers have accepted the challenge of protecting our natural resources and continue to educate themselves about new technologies and techniques as they are developed.

Filter Strip...a strip of grass, trees, or shrubs that filters runoff and removes contaminants before they reach water bodies or water sources such as wells.

Consider picking up a copy of "Conservation Choices" to help you understand some of the newer practices and to refresh yourself on the old standbys. A copy is available at your Soil and Water Conservation District Office.

Grassed Waterway...shaping and establishing grass in a natural drainageway to prevent gullies from forming.

Summer Intern

Last summer, Erin Maloney worked for the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District as a District Employee Summer Intern. This year Erin has returned to our office, but is working for The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Erin will be working on surveying and designing grassed waterways.

Erin has just completed her sophomore year at Purdue University, majoring in Environmental Engineering. Away from studies, Erin also finished her second year on Purdue's Rowing Team.

Erin

Through NRCS, Erin will receive experience in a field of her interest, while NRCS gains technical assistance with conservation planning.

Landscaping and Site Management To Control Runoff

Some stormwater risks can be controlled by making changes to buildings, paved surfaces, the landscape, and soil surfaces. This section reviews some easily addressed problems, as well as major landscape alterations you might want to consider.

Are there areas of bare soil around your home?

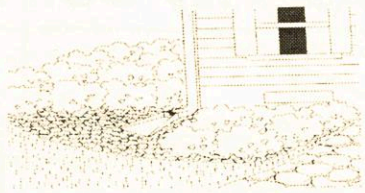
Areas of bare soil often exist in vegetable and flower gardens, on newly seeded lawns, and around construction projects. Even on gentle slopes, water from rain and snow can remove large amounts of soil and carry it to wetlands, rivers, and lakes. Planting grass or other ground covers is the best way to stop erosion. Putting a straw or chip mulch over gardens or newly seeded areas will slow erosion. Straw bales, diversion ditches, and commercially available silt fences around construction sites can help slow runoff and trap sediment on-site. If you are working with a contractor, insist that precautions are taken to control runoff and erosion during construction.

Can you eliminate paved surfaces or install alternatives?

Concrete and asphalt roads, driveways, and walkways prevent rainwater from soaking into the ground. When you have the choice, consider alternative materials such as gravel or wood chips for walkways. Avoid paving areas such as patios. Where you need a more solid surface, consider using a "porous pavement" made from interlocking cement blocks or rubber mats that allow spaces for rainwater to seep into the ground. If you must pour concrete, keep the paved area as short and narrow as possible.

Is your basement protected from stormwater seepage or flooding?

Stormwater in your basement can be a hazard in two ways: first, if water carries contaminants or disease organisms into your home, and second, if water picks up chemicals stored in your basement and carries them into the sewer or ground. Basement windows or doors are common stormwater entry points and should be sealed against leaks. It is best if window and door sills are at least a foot above ground level. If windows are at or below ground level, they can be protected with clear plastic covers available in building supply stores. Window wells that extend above ground level can help divert stormwater. Your yard should be sloped away from the foundation to prevent water form pooling near the house and leaking into the basement.



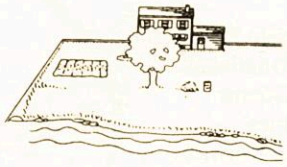
Roof drainage should be directed to the lawn or a flower bed and away from the foundation and paved surfaces.

Does roof water flow onto pavement or grass?

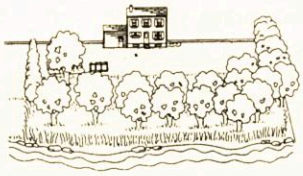
Your house roof, like pavement, sheds water. If downspouts from roof gutters empty onto grassy areas, the water will have a chance to soak into the ground. Aim downspouts away from foundations and paved surfaces. For roofs without gutters, plant grass, spread mulch, or use gravel under the drip line to prevent soil erosion and increase the ground's capacity to absorb water. Consider using cisterns or rain barrels to catch rainwater for watering lawns and gardens in dry weather.

Can you change the layout of your landscape to reduce runoff?

An essential part of stormwater management is keeping water from leaving your property, or at least slowing its flow as much as possible. Many home lawns are sloped to encourage water to run off onto neighboring property or streets. Instead, you could provide low areas landscaped with shrubs and flowers to encourage water to soak into the ground. If your yard is hilly, you can terrace slopes to slow the flow of runoff and make mowing and gardening easier. If you have a large lot, consider "naturalizing" areas with prairie, woodland, or wetland plants. If your property adjoins a lake or stream, one of the best ways to slow and filter runoff is to leave a buffer strip of thick vegetation along the waterfront. Good courses for ideas are your local Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or Soil and Water Conservation District offices.



Mowing up to the streambank increases rainfall runoff into the stream.



To help prevent erosion, leave an unmowed buffer strip of thick vegetation along streambanks and lakeshores.

St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District
5605 U.S. 31 South, Suite 4
South Bend, IN 46614

St. Joseph County Soil And Water

Supervisors:
Paul Williams III, Chairman
Dave Craft, V-Chairman
Steve Horvath, Member
John Kulwicki, Member
Dale Stoner, Member

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John Dooms
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Melvin Kulwicki
Jim LaFree
Charles Lehman
Jay Lindenman
Joe Long
Randy Matthys
Eugene Myers
Beverly Riddle
Richard Schmidt

MISSION

To provide guidance and education to the youth and adults of St. Joseph County and to administer programs to preserve, protect and improve soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources for future generations.

Honorary Members:
Bernard Byrd
Al Gostola
Harold Mutti

Office Staff:
Debbie Knepp, NRCS
Rick Glassman, SWCD
Troy Manges, SWCD
Tonia Albright, SWCD

Farm Service Agency Staff:
Mike Hoskins, CED
Helene Cannoot
Cindy Philhower
Denise Trimboli
Dee Fox
Claudia Bell