



St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

March/April 2023
Volume 25, Issue 2

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What's Going On... Events hosted by the St. Joseph County SWCD & Our Partners in Conservation

March

1st -Producer's Meeting--
Seasoned Banquet Center
(formerly known as Christo
Banquet Center in
Plymouth)
(9am-3pm)

21st-- March Board
Meeting - Open to the
Public 7pm
LOCATION: North
Liberty Branch Library

31st -April 2, 2023-- Ag Days
-- St. Joseph County
Fairgrounds (Friday 9am-
5pm, Saturday 10am-5pm,
Sunday 11am-4pm)

April

18th-- Monthly Board
Meeting-- Alligator Room
at Center Township Library
Branch (7pm)



63rd Annual Meeting Recap



Sarah Longenecker, Jorge Lozoya, Debbie Knepp, and Ally Pudlo On Friday, February 10th, the Soil and Water Conservation District celebrated 63 years of serving St. Joseph County at its Annual Meeting. We held an election at this meeting for a new supervisor and that new supervisor is Joe Gregory. We would like to thank Theri Niemier for running for this position as well. We would also like to thank our speaker, Dr. Jennifer Kanine for an outstanding presentation on The Success Stories of Conservation. We so much appreciate the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi's work with conservation and continued efforts to educate others about those efforts as well. We partook in a delicious Polish-style dinner and then recognized our 2022 awards/recognition recipients. Our awards and recognitions went to:

Randy Ehninger--
Conservation Farmer of
the Year



Unity Gardens-- River Friendly
Farmer of the Year



**Kim & Andrew
Bonham**-- Friend of
Forestry



John Dooms-- Over
41 years of service



Thank you to our
award winners and to
John Dooms for the
great work done for conservation.

Welcome new Elected supervisor Joe Gregory:

Joe is a mechanical engineer and landowner who lives in St. Joseph County. Joe has recently taken an interest in farming. He has been raising hogs and plans to expand to raise beef cattle as well. He is learning a lot about regenerative farming practices like rotational grazing and how to implement them for the success of his farm. He is interested in regenerative farming, renewable energy systems, rotational grazing, home vegetable gardening, and pollinator co-habitation.



Science Alive Recap

We had a blast at Science Alive! on Saturday, February 11th, at the St. Joseph County Public Library's Community Center.

Our booth theme for this year was all about pollinators. We had a pollinator activity where visitors could see what their day would be like if they were a pollinator, and many saw right away that it is not easy being one! Families got to take home some free native pollinator plant seeds and more information on how to make their own pollinator garden. Keep an eye out for our pollinator booth at 2023 Ag Days (Friday thru Sunday, 3/31-4/2)!



NRCS Energy Tools

The NRCS has developed a variety of energy assessments you can run from home to help identify inefficiencies in your agricultural energy use and how they can be improved. These assessments include 4 Energy Estimator tools, 10 Energy Conservation Tools, and 6 Renewable Energy Tools. The Energy Estimators focus on Animal Housing, Irrigation, Nitrogen, and Tillage. Once you input information based on your current management, the tools provide recommendations on where you can become more energy efficient. To use these tools or to find more information about these twenty resources, you can visit <https://energytools.sc.egov.usda.gov/> or scan the QR code with a smart phone which will direct you there automatically.



Funding Opportunities

Conservation Reserve Program

General signup for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will open from February 27 through April 7, 2023. General CRP helps producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Additionally, General CRP includes a Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to help increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping producers and landowners establish trees and permanent grasses, enhance wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands. Contact the Farm Service Agency at 574-936-2024 x2 for more information.

Clean Water Indiana

This is the final year of the SWCD's Clean Water Indiana grant. If you are noticing compaction, weed pressure, erosion, or other issues in your fields chances are there is a cover crop that can help. The St. Joseph County SWCD has grant funds to assist in getting them planted. This grant can pay \$20 per acre for up to 200 acres. Contact the SWCD at 574-936-2024 x4 if you would like an application or more information.

What's the *Buzz* on Pollinators?

Pollinators have become a huge topic of conversation over the last few years. Many people think of honeybees when they think of pollinators and imagine the flowers that bloom because of their vital pollination work. But pollinators are much more than honeybees and spring-time blooms; they are the backbones of our food supply, and they may come in some surprising shapes and sizes.

Here in Indiana, our pollinators include species of bees, wasps, beetles, flies, butterflies, moths, and even the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Pollinators don't pollinate the same plants; they have preferences in the kinds of plants they visit. For example, we don't see bees visiting plants with red flowers because they cannot see the color red like we can.

In addition to the beautiful flowering plants and trees that are pollinated, pollinators are also responsible for pollinating some of our most important crops. Pollinators provide pollination services to over 180,000 different plant species and more than 1200 crops. According to the Pollinator Partnership, "1 out of every three bites of food you eat is because of pollinators". Delicious produce, like apples, peaches, pumpkins, and strawberries, are here because we have pollinators. Even the foods we don't normally attribute to pollinators, like chocolate, coffee, and dairy products, are by-products of pollination.

With all of the good work that pollinators do, their populations are in decline, and this decline is attributed mostly to a loss in feeding and nesting habitats. Less pollinators means fewer plants being pollinated. This can lead to less food being produced and more food insecurity.

But we can help pollinators! Creating pollinator habitats can make a big impact for pollinators in your community. When establishing pollinator habitats, native plants are used. Native plants and grasses are acclimated to the climate of their native regions, require less maintenance than non-native plants, and provide shelter and nectar to native pollinators. If you are interested in turning part of your space into pollinator habitat, contact our office. Through a Clean Water Indiana Grant, the SWCD can help with a cost share program for spaces that are as little as 1/2 acre up to 10 acres. USDA NRCS also has programs that can help with the cost of installing pollinator plantings. Contact Sarah or Debbie to discuss all the available options at 574-936-2024 ext. 4.



Urban and Small Farm Soil Health Summit

On January 21st the St. Joseph County Urban and Small Farm Working Group hosted an all-day educational event on soil health on small and urban farms at the newly opened Welcome Center at Unity Gardens. While the soil health principles stay the same regardless of the size of a farming operation there are some obstacles that can be unique on smaller farms. We spent the day learning about and discussing permanent bed preparation methods, crop rotations and what needs to be considered to help avoid or break up pest cycles, soil test basics and nutrient management, different methods of mulching, cover crops, and cover crop termination. Participants had many questions for our speakers Jamie Perry, Elli Blaine, Marian Rodriguez-Soto from IASWCD's Urban Soil Health Program and Kevin Allison from Marion County SWCD. This event set the stage for future educational tours, classes, and hands on learning. If you are interested in learning more about the working group or would like to be notified of upcoming events, contact our office at 574-936-2024 ext. 4 or info@stjosephswcd.org.





Visit us on Facebook 2903 GARY DRIVE PLYMOUTH IN 46563

St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership

FREE WILDLIFE FOOD PLOT SEEDS

Free wildlife food plot seed will be available for St. Joseph and Marshall County residents. The seed comes in gallon sized bags, limited to two bags per household. We will have sunflowers, a pollinator friendly food plot mix, and a wildlife food plot mix. Pickup will be in early April with the seed available on a first come, first served basis while supplies last. The exact week of pick up will be posted at a later date. Please check our website or our Facebook page for further updates. Or contact our office at:



574-936-2024 Ext. 4

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SWCD Supervisors:

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

SWCD Associate Supervisors:

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

SWCD Honorary Members:

Jerry Knepp
Keith Lineback
William Millar

St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation Partnership Staff:

Sarah Longenecker, SWCD
Ally Pudlo, SWCD
Rylee Stout, SWCD
Debbie Knepp, NRCS
Jorge Lozoya, NRCS

Farm Service Agency Staff:

Gideon Nobble, CED
Devan Harrell
Aldona Martin
Diane Stichter
Michael Cuff

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!!!!



Scan me to go Green!