



St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

March / April 2018
Volume 20, Issue 2

2903 Gary Drive, Ste 1, Plymouth, IN 46563
Website: stjosephswcd.org

Telephone (574) 936-2024
e-mail: info@stjosephswcd.org

What's Going On...

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

March

2nd - NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program Application Deadline

20th - 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

30th - Good Friday - County Holiday

April

17th - Monthly Board Meeting - Open to the Public 7:00 PM LOCATION: Alligator Room Centre Township Library at Kem and Miami Roads in South Bend - 1150 Kem Road South Bend, IN 46614

20th - Youth Poster Contest deadline

Cost Share Money Available to Install Raingardens.

What is a Raingarden?

Raingardens are an attractive, landscaped area slightly lower than ground level designed to capture rain water runoff from impervious surfaces.

Why Install a Raingarden?

- Raingardens limit pollution in our rivers and streams.
- Raingardens are attractive.
- Raingardens can be an excellent pollinator habitat.
- Raingardens can solve erosion problems.

Why Raingardens Matter

New development continues to replace green space with impervious surfaces like rooftops, paved streets, driveways, sidewalks and parking lots. Impervious surfaces don't allow water to soak into the ground so more water is flowing into the storm sewers at a very fast rate. In a natural environment, rainwater moves through the landscape very slowly. Rain is captured on leaves and branches of vegetation, where it evaporates or trickles down the trunk to the ground. Leaf litter and natural mulch on the ground soak up rainwater. Deep plant roots loosen the soil and help water soak into the ground. Raingardens are a great way to slow rainwater down and mimic nature.

What About Mosquitoes?

A raingarden is designed to infiltrate the water into the soil in approximately one day. The development of a mosquito, from egg to adult takes 10 to 14 days depending on the air temperature. Therefore, if your raingarden is properly designed, you won't breed mosquitoes!

How do I know if I need a Raingarden?

Next time it rains, grab a rain coat and your rain boots and go outside! Walk around your yard and observe how rainwater flows through your property. You will see that where rainwater lands on trees and landscaped areas much of the rain soaks into the ground. Where rainwater lands on hard surfaces, most of the rain runs off and looks for a place to drain away, often causing erosion in the process. The EPA defines stormwater runoff as a major

threat to water quality in our lakes and streams! Typically, we collect stormwater runoff in drains and pipes and get it out of the way and off our property as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, that stormwater is carrying pollutants that flow DIRECTLY into our rivers and streams.

POSSIBLE POLLUTANTS:

- Gas/Oil from cars
- Soil/Sediment from Erosion
- Trash
- Detergent/Soap from washing the car in the driveway
- Lawn Fertilizer Runoff
- Animal Waste

Need Help Designing or Installing Your Raingarden?

Through a Clean Water Indiana (CWI) grant, St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District has funds available to help you with installation costs of your raingarden. Installing yourself but need technical assistance? We can help with that too! Contact our office for more information. 574-936-2024 x 4. info@stjosephswcd.org or visit our website at www.stjosephswcd.org.



Source Consulted: Rusty Schmidt, Dan Shaw and David Dods. (2007) *The Blue Thumb Guide to Raingardens*. Waterdrop Innovations, LLC.

Cost share money still available for Cover Crops, Pollinator Habitat, Filter Strips & No-Till.

Application deadline May 18.





Experts talk soil health

Written and produced by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service

Fence rows provide insights into restoring healthy soils, expert says

"Any farmer can tell you his or her fence rows have the best soil on the farm," says Jim Hoorman, an assistant professor and Extension educator for Ohio State University.

"The organic matter there, where the soil was built naturally, may be 5 to 6 percent or higher depending on soil type," Hoorman says. But organic matter levels have been cut in half on tilled soils.

"And the critical part of what's missing is the active organic matter that comes from live roots. So what we're trying to do is create farm fields with soil like the fence rows," he says.

That means eliminating tillage and creating continuous living cover on the land. Hoorman has worked with farmers who have regained organic matter to levels as high as 5 percent with the system.

"Three of our primary goals for healthier soils and sustained yields are to get rid of compaction (improve soil structure), add organic matter, and jump-start microbial activity in the soil," Hoorman says. "With that in mind, the best place to start no-till is in a long-term alfalfa field or in a CRP grass field where you already have healthy microbial populations.

"On the other hand, if you start in fields where you've been tilling for years, you have layers of compaction with the wrong microbes. The transition can be made, but it takes longer and it takes more nitrogen."

Expert urges farmers to ask—and answer—five questions before cover cropping

Joel Gruver is Western Illinois University's go-to cover crop guy. He has worked with many farmers who are using cover crops, and he has tested cover crops on University plots. He understands that farmers considering soil health-building cover crops should go in with eyes wide open.

As a result, Gruver has a long list of questions a farmer should ask—and answer—before the first cover crops are planted. Five of the most important questions are:

1. What equipment is available (owned, available for rent or custom hire) to seed cover crops in my area?
2. What windows of opportunity exist as defined by weather and climate, current cropping practices, cover crop genetics—and can current windows be expanded by acceptable adjustments like shorter season crops or alternative cover crops?
3. How will I terminate the cover crop and achieve an acceptable stand of the next crop?
4. Will I have the time and labor to make this work?
5. What's my contingency plan—and risks—if the cover crop doesn't establish or doesn't die on schedule?

"Cover crop management today isn't just a revisiting of old practices abandoned by the fathers and grandfathers of today's farmers," he says. "Innovative large-scale grain farmers have started integrating cover crops into their production systems in ways that were never even considered before."

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.

3rd Annual Tri-County Farming for the Future Producers Workshop

On Thursday February 15th, the St Joseph, Starke & Marshall County SWCD's held their 3rd Annual Farming for the Future Producers Workshop at Christo's Banquet Center in Plymouth, IN. 89 producers joined us in learning about cover crops & soil health with Barry Fisher, Central Region Leader for the Soil Health Division of USDA-NRCS as well as the new dicamba regulations & cover crops and nutrient

management with Purdue Extension. We would like to thank all of our corporate sponsors and the Clean Water Indiana Grant that helped to cover the cost of this workshop.



National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Responds to President Trump's FY19 Budget Proposal

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today (February 12, 2018), the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) released the following statement regarding President Donald Trump's budget for conservation programs in the 2019 fiscal year.

"Once again, this administration is calling on American producers to do more with less," NACD President Brent Van Dyke said. "The president's budget proposes cuts to almost every area of USDA's discretionary and mandatory budgets, including nearly \$15 billion in cuts to farm bill conservation programs and over a 20 percent reduction to Conservation Operations."

Within the conservation portfolio, the president's FY19 budget proposes a funding level of \$669 million for Conservation Operations, a \$200 million cut to the account that funds conservation planning and technical assistance. The budget also requests significant cuts to the Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program within Conservation Operations.

"Conservation planning is the lifeblood of voluntary conservation and the building block on which all other conservation programs stand," Van Dyke said.

"Proposing extreme cuts to technical assistance programs at a time when the administration is asking for greater customer service just doesn't add up. The president's budget proposal is a reminder that we must continue educating our lawmakers about just how important locally-led conservation efforts are to this country now and for future generations."

The budget includes a legislative proposal to eliminate the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and funding for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP). In addition to eliminating these USDA programs, the budget requests to completely eliminate the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Section 319 nonpoint source grant program, which helps address nonpoint pollution from agricultural as well as non-agricultural sources. The budget also proposes cutting state and private forestry funding by over 40 percent.

NACD applauds Congress' past efforts to support the conservation programs most vital to our nation's natural resources and calls on Congress to oppose President Trump's FY19 budget.

SWCD Participates in 26th Annual Science Alive

On February 3, 2018, the St. Joseph County SWCD's Science Alive booth was buzzing with visitors. This year the entire event saw about 3,800 visitors at the Main Branch of the St Joseph County Library. Kids were interacting with our augmented reality sandbox and the Journey of a Raindrop Game for the full six hours, often

worked. It also gave our staff and volunteers time to talk about actions kids and adults can take to keep their watershed healthy, such as planting native plants, managing animal waste, and reusing rainwater. If you are interested in having the augmented reality sandbox created. Children or other educational programs brought to your organization, please contact our Environmental Education Coordinator, Jane Sablich, at jane.sablich@in.nacdnet.net.



St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership

Youth Poster Contest



Deadline for
posters is
April 20th.

Check out our website for full details and contest rules.
www.stjosephswcd.org/2018-youth-poster-contest

Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Supervisors:
John Doods, Chair
Jeremy Cooper, Vice Chair
Mike Burkholder
Stacey Silvers
Dave Vandewalle

SWCD Associate Supervisors:
Dave Craft
Jim LaFree
Charles Lehman
Randy Matthys
Richard Schmidt
Arlene Schuchman
Dale Stoner
Dru Wrasse

SWCD Honorary Members:
Bernard Byrd
Jerry Knepp
Keith Lineback
William Millar

St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation Partnership Staff:
Sarah Longenecker, SWCD
Sandra Hoffarth, SWCD
Jane Sablich, SWCD
Debbie Knepp, NRCS

Farm Service Agency Staff:
Gideon Nobbe, CED
Aldona Martin
Abby Ciesielski
Tara Wolfe
Devan Herrell



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!!!!