



St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

September/October 2021
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What's Going On...

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

September

3rd - County Holiday
6th - Labor Day - Office Closed
21st - SWCD monthly board meeting. Location and time TBA. Open to the public.

October

11th - Federal Holiday
19th - SWCD monthly board meeting. Location and time TBA. Open to the public.

2021 Leaf Collection Information

Any resident in the unincorporated areas of St. Joseph County may sign up to participate in the Voluntary 2021 Leaf Collection Program:

- ◆ Costs range between \$99 - \$249 depending on timeliness of registration
- ◆ Includes 4 Fall Passes and 1 Spring Pass
- ◆ Service ONLY provided to registered participants
- ◆ Visit www.sjclp.com for more information.



The St. Joseph County Council has Banned burning due to resident respiratory concerns at all times. **Leaf burning is illegal.** Partially burned piles will not be collected.

St Joseph Co SWCD Welcomes a New Environmental Education Coordinator

Hello, St. Joseph County!

My name is Ally Pudlo, and I am the new Environmental Education Coordinator for St. Joseph County SWCD.

I graduated from Saint Mary's College in 2017 with a Bachelors in Biology, specifically with a concentration in Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology. I was born here in St. Joseph County and have lived here all of my life. In my free time, I enjoy reading, writing, hiking, and rock collecting. A fun fact about me is that I am a published

writer!

My past job experience has taken me from the academic setting, conducting and analyzing bat echolocation research, to working as a front-line interpretive naturalist at state and county parks. I feel that my past experience and education has given me a wealth of knowledge and creativity to bring to this position.

I am excited to be working with SWCD and to be able to promote our programs and learn alongside you!



The St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District offers programs to any school or group located within St. Joseph County.

The SWCD believes that conservation education extends to all ages and that students can develop an understanding of conservation at an early age and hopefully carry those lessons with them throughout their lives.

The St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District provides many educational opportunities throughout each year for schools and other groups serving students and adults committed to life-long learning, including:

- Outreach Programs
- Teacher Workshops
- Outdoor Environmental Lab Development and Enhancement

- Field Trips
- One-on-One Site Visits
- Conservation Field Days and Workshops
- Special events like Science Alive, Ag Days, and Growing Summit
- K-12 Annual Conservation Poster Contest
- Curriculum Development (including remote curriculum)
- Educational Resources and Supplies (ex. Augmented Reality Sandbox and Wildlife Kit)
- Remote learning videos, presentations, and lesson plans

In many cases, the SWCD has grants available in order to provide programs at no cost. If you would like to schedule a program with her, please go to <https://www.stjosephswcd.org/education> and click on the red button or our office.

Conservation Closeup: Songbird Deaths in Indiana

By now you have probably heard about a mysterious death affecting songbirds across Indiana. In late May 2021, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) started receiving reports of sick and dying birds from Monroe County in Indiana. These birds were reported to have had eye swelling with a crusty discharge around the eyes and were experiencing signs of neurological abnormalities.

This is not just limited to Indiana. Several states across the U.S. are experiencing similar issues with the health of their songbird populations.

Many species have been reported as being affected, including backyard bird species like American robin, blue jay, brown-headed cowbird, common grackle, European starling, sparrow, house finch, northern cardinal, red-headed woodpecker, and wren.

Since June 25th, there has been a moratorium on feeding songbirds across the state to help slow the spread of this illness. On August 9th, 2021, the Indiana DNR released an update on the songbird deaths, announcing that 76 counties may resume feeding their songbirds if they are not observing sick or dead birds in their yard. Those counties should still take precautions when feeding the birds.

- Seed and suet feeders should be cleaned at least once every two weeks by scrubbing feeders with soap and water, followed by a short soak in a 10% bleach solution to keep birds healthy and limit the spread of disease.
- Hummingbird feeders should also be cleaned with a 10% bleach solution and rinsed thoroughly once a week.

The DNR and partners have been investigating the ongoing issue, and the cause or transmission is currently unknown. What is currently known is that out of the 3,400 cases of sick or dead birds reported, DNR Biologists have confirmed more than 500 possible cases in 72 counties that involved the symptoms reported with this illness.

Based on the data gathered, it appears that the illness affecting the birds is consistently affecting specific regions. There is no imminent threat to people, the population of specific bird

species, or to the overall population of birds in Indiana.

The following counties should continue to refrain from feeding the birds as recommended by the DNR: Allen, Carroll, Clark, Floyd, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Lake, Marion, Monroe, Morgan, Porter, **St. Joseph**, Tippecanoe, and Whitley. These counties should also take the following precautions to help stop the outbreak afflicting our songbird populations:

- Remove their feeders, including hummingbird feeders.
- Feeders, bird baths, or other sources that encourage the congregation of wild birds should be taken down or discontinued. Limiting crowding can help limit the spread of disease.
- Avoid handling birds, but wear disposable gloves if handling is necessary.
- Keep pets (including pet birds) away from sick or dead birds as a precaution.

If you happen to find a bird in your backyard or neighborhood with swelling and/or crusty/gummy/closed eyes and abnormal neurological signs (lethargy, tremors, stumbling), please report it to the DNR's sick or dead wildlife reporting system (<https://www.in.gov/dnr/fish-and-wildlife/wildlife-resources/wildlife-diseases-in-indiana/sick-or-dead-wildlife-reporting/>).

For more information, visit: <https://www.in.gov/dnr/fish-and-wildlife/wildlife-resources/wildlife-diseases-in-indiana/songbird-deaths/>.



New Resource Specialists Available



St. Joseph County SWCD is excited to have two new resources available to help our landowners and communities meet their conservation goals! Through the Indiana Invasives Initiative we have a Regional Invasive Species Specialist, Mandi Glanz. Glanz is helping facilitate the formation of the St. Joseph/Marshall County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMA) as well as other counties CISMAs in her region. Mandi also provides one on one landowner surveys to assist with identifying invasive species on individuals' properties and developing a plan to eradicate the invasive species found. If you are interested in scheduling a landowner survey you can do so at <http://www.sicim.info/assistance> . If you are interested in getting more information about invasive species or CISMAs contact our office at 574-936-2024 ext. 4 or check out <http://www.sicim.info/> .

What is Pure Live Seed and Why Is It Important?

Many of our most effective conservation practices are vegetative practices including cover crops, warm season grass and wildflower plantings, filter strips and pasture/hay plantings. To end up with an adequate stand, we must plant these practices by the Pure Live Seed (PLS) rate.

Seed can be purchased in two ways – in bulk or by Pure Live Seed (PLS). When you buy in bulk, you are buying whatever is in the bag – which includes good viable seed, dormant seed, non-viable seed, other seed, chaff and other inert material. When you purchase seed in PLS rates, you are buying the known viable, live seed in the bag.

PLS is figured by multiplying the pounds of bulk seed by the the % purity and the % germination. These percentages can be found on the seed tag that is attached to each bag or provided by the seed vendor. Purity is the percent of the bulk seed lot that is actual, viable, desired seed in the lot. Germination is the percent of the seed sample that develops into a live seedling during testing.

When planting a vegetative conservation practice:

- 1) Use lab tested seed.
- 2) Figure PLS rates from the seed tags and plant enough bulk seed to apply the correct PLS rate.
- 3) Check the seed tag for the presence of any noxious, invasive or troublesome weeds. Clean seed is important to stop the spread of weeds.
- 4) Keep copies of the seed tags for documentation.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service seeding recommendations are always given in PLS. For any planting to be successful, you need to have a certain number of plants per square foot. Planting bulk seed often results in less plants than you expected in the stand ,which in turn results in a weedy, sparse stand. PLS planting rates result in an adequate stand for the intended purpose. These ideal rates insure proper plant density for the conservation practice being planned.

| | | | | | | |
|--------|---|--------|---|-------------------|---|----------|
| Bulk | x | Purity | x | Germ+Dormant+Hard | = | PLS |
| 50 lbs | x | 99.35% | x | 93% | = | 43.2 lbs |

| | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|---|-------------------------|---------|
| Kind: | LADINO CLOVER | | <i>Trifolium repens</i> | |
| Variety: | VNS | | | |
| Lot No: | L113-16-WC14 | | TZ: | % |
| Purity: | 99.35 | % | Germ: | 74.00 % |
| Crop: | 0.00 | % | Hard: | 19.00 % |
| Inert: | 0.65 | % | Dormant: | 0.00 % |
| Weeds: | 0.00 | % | Total: | 93.00 % |
| PLS: | 92.40 | % | Test Date: | 01/20 |
| Origin: | OR | | | |
| Noxious weeds: | NONE FOUND | | | |
| | | | Lbs Net Wt: | |
| | | | PLS Net Wt: | |
| | | | Kgs Net Wt: | |

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We also have a new Regional Urban Soil Health Specialist, Stephanie Wulpenry. Wulpenry is here to deliver technical assistance, training, education, and outreach related to soil health management systems to urban landowners, land-users, and other interested groups. She will also be working in communities to form local working groups to help identify the specific needs in our county or area to better serve our urban and small farmers. She is an employee of the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD). If you would like more information on the Urban Soil Health Program you can find it at:

<http://wordpress.iaswcd.org/for-districts/statewide-initiatives/urbansoilhealth/>

If you would like to schedule a time for a one-on-one consultation you can contact Stephanie directly at stephanie-wulpenry@iaswcd.org.



Visit us on Facebook 2903 GARY DRIVE PLYMOUTH IN 46563

St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership

What are your neighbors doing?

An interview with Charlotte Wolfe from Prairie Winds Nature Farm in Lakeville, IN.

Why did you get involved with conservation? We decided to buy a property nearby so we could do a wetland or prairie restoration. We found this property where you stood up on the deck and it looked like we could own a little Watershed. This land was all just an agricultural field when we started doing our land restoration project.

What type of practices do you have and how does it benefit your organization? With the help of NRCS and the district, we have been able to complete several projects over the years. When we first moved to our property we did a Windbreak because the wind was incredible. The Windbreak helps protect us from snow drifts and protects our established gardens and fruit trees. We have done a wetland restoration with a control structure behind the woods so that the water would start to back up and hold onto the property. Prior to doing this restoration it was row crops and all the drainage tiles were meant to take the water off the property. We planted a native prairie and we have woods on our property that we maintain. Then for the animals, we have rotational grazing set up with our pastures and heavy use areas. I'm sure there is more that I forgot, but these are the main ones.

What is the benefit of keeping all the water on the property? The main benefit was knowing that I'm protecting the soil and improving water quality. The higher up in the Watershed that you can start to trap water and keep it on your land to soak into the ground, you're recharging the groundwater. All this water would otherwise have been draining off along with its associated soil and associated contaminants that hurt areas downstream. We are also providing much needed habitat for birds and other wildlife.

SWCD Supervisors:

John Dooms, Chairman
Dave Vandewalle, Vice Chairman
Mike Burkholder
Sam James
Chris Matthys

SWCD Associate Supervisors:

Dave Craft
Chuck Lehman
Randy Matthys
Richard Schmidt
Dave Straughn
Dru Wrasse

SWCD Honorary Members:

Jerry Knepp
Keith Lineback
William Millar

St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation Partnership Staff:

Sandra Hoffarth, SWCD
Sarah Longenecker, SWCD
Ally Pudlo, SWCD
Debbie Knepp, NRCS

Farm Service Agency Staff:

Gideon Nobbe, CED
Devan Harrell
Katie Leitch
Aldona Martin
Tara Wolfe

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!