St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District

CONSERVATION KALEIDOSCOPE

Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

Jan/Feb/Mar 2005 | 5605 U.S. 31 South, Suite 4 *South Bend, IN * | Telephone (574) 291-7444 Ext. 3 | Editor: Troy Manges
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Calendar of Events

January 17
Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday
Office Closed

January 18
SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 PM – Farm Bureau Mtg. Room

January 21
45th Annual Meeting of the St. Joseph County SWCD

February 4
Northern Indiana Grazing Conference

February 21
George Washington's Birthday
Office Closed

February 22
SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 PM– Farm Bureau Mtg. Room

March 1
Tree Order Forms Due

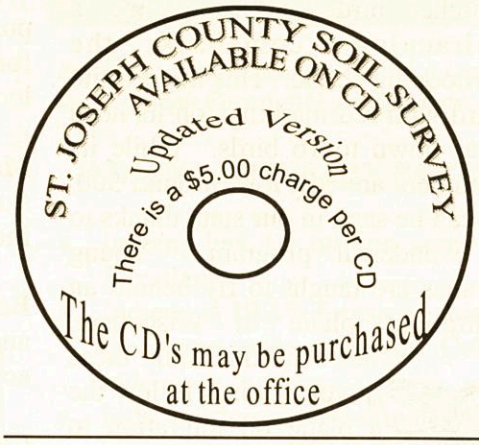
March 21
SWCD Monthly Board Meeting
7:30 PM – Farm Bureau Mtg. Room

John Juhasz

45th Annual Meeting of the St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation District

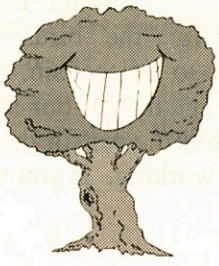
Friday, January 21st, 2005
6:30 p.m.
St. Adalbert's Heritage Center
Speaker: John Juhasz, Juhasz Sez Productions
Reservations due by January 13th
Ticket Price: $8.00/ea.
Call for tickets at: 574-291-7444, ext. 3

(in the event of inclement weather the meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, January 28th, 2005.)



The updated Soil Survey CD is a little more user friendly due to a few revisions. All other information has remained the same.

Tree Order Forms Due March 1



What's Inside . . .

UN-ENDANGER ANIMALS

Now that deer season is over it is a good time to reflect on our success. I am not talking about whether you harvested a deer, but the fact that we even have White-tailed Deer in Indiana at all. You see, from 1919 until 1935 we did not have any deer in the state. Due to loss of food and habitat, along with unregulated hunting, deer became extirpated or extinct in Indiana. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) reintroduced deer that had been captured from Michigan, Missouri and Pennsylvania starting in 1935. Since then the population has grown and today is constantly managed using hunters to help control the population.

Deer are not the only animal that has seen a population growth in our state. This winter keep an eye out for our national bird, the Bald Eagle. We actually have quite a few in our state now. This is amazing since not so long ago it was thought that this great bird was headed for extinction. The pesticide DDT, a great insect killer, built up in the food chain and caused the eggs of many birds to be laid with no shell. Without young, the population plummeted. In 1972, DDT was banned in the USA but the damage had been done. That is when a hacking program began. Young eagles born in captivity were released into the wild in hopes that they would build up the population. In 1985, Indiana joined the hacking program with the hopes of having five pairs of nesting by the year 2000. The first pair nested in 1991 and last year we had 48 pairs of Bald Eagles nesting in our state.

The list does not end here, Peregrine Falcons also affected by DDT, saw a drastic decrease in their population. A hacking program was also started for this, the fastest of all animals. It dives at speeds reaching 200 mph. Since Peregrines nest on cliffs, these birds were actually released in our cities, including South Bend. Last year 10 pairs nested in Indiana and we actually had a pair successfully raise young in South Bend.

Osprey are presently being released and we have nesting pairs at Potato Creek State Park. This winter a nesting structure is to be built along the St. Joseph River in hopes of attracting another pair.

Finally I would like to talk about another bird that is making a miraculous comeback, the Whooping Crane. This huge white bird with red markings on its head was down to 16 birds. While its numbers are still low, around 500, it can be seen in our state thanks to a wonderful program. Young cranes are taught to fly behind an ultralight plane in Wisconsin. Then in the fall these young birds follow the plane on migration to Florida and right through Indiana. In the spring the birds will migrate back to Wisconsin, on their own and again visit our state. This is the fourth year for the program and it is working. If you want to see a Whooping Crane, Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife area is the best bet. Fall is the best time but the birds also stop during the spring migration.

The bottom line is if we care, we can turn endangered animals into un-endangered animals.

To find out more visit these web sites:
www.in.gov/dnr
www.bringbackthecranes.org.

Educational Trunks For Loan

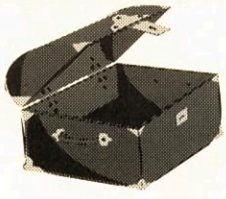
The district has three educational trunks for loan to educators.

Water Quality Trunk — contains posters, activities and even chemicals for testing the water quality of our local waterways.

Mammal Trunk — contains furs, skulls, and activities dealing with Indiana mammals.

Bat Trunk — contains posters, skull and skeleton of a bat and many activities and information.

Call the office and ask for Rick to reserve a time for your class to use these trunks at 574-291-7444, ext. 3.



WOODLAND TIMES

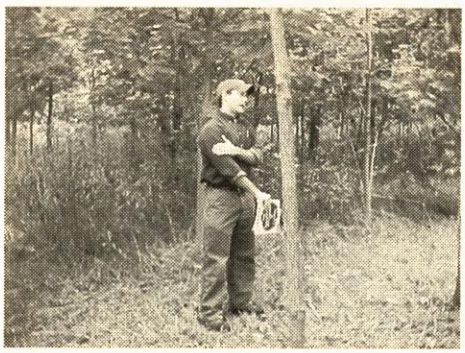
Forestry News Updates for St. Joseph County

THREE COUNTY FORESTRY FIELD DAY A BIG SUCCESS!

The Three-County Forestry Field Day is sponsored by Elkhart, Kosciusko and St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. This year the field day was held on September 18, 2004, in St. Joseph County at Hamilton Communities, Inc. near New Carlisle. Hamilton Communities sits on 250 acres of rolling fields and forest. The forest at Hamilton Communities has been a managed classified forest since 1948.

Approximately 60 people attended the Field Day and heard the following presentations:
Bruce Wakeland – Management History and Timber Sales
Matt Fromm – Tree Planting and Thinning
Tom Crowe – Timber Stand Improvement
Linda Byer – Wildlife Habitat.
John Dittmar – Warm Season Grasses and Wildflowers.

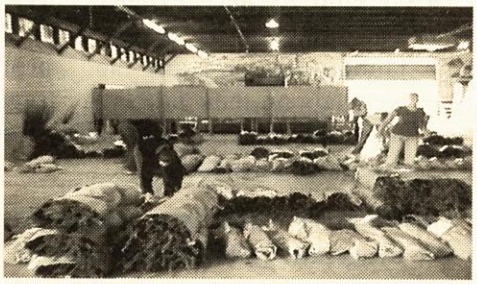
We would like to thank Hamilton Communities for hosting the event this year. Watch for future Three County Forestry Field Days in upcoming newsletters or contact the office later this year for further information.



Matt Fromm

It is not too late to get your trees ordered for this year from the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District. The deadline to order trees is March 1, 2005.

The trees will be available for pick up at the Swine Barn at the St. Joseph County 4-H Fairgrounds on Saturday, April 16, 2005 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. If you have questions about ordering trees or picking them up please contact our office.



Pre-Paid tree orders ready for pick up at the St. Joseph County 4-H Fairgrounds.

INDIANA FORESTRY FACTS

- Indiana has 4.5 million acres of forestland.
- Indiana is 19.4% forested; this is the same percentage as Colorado.
- Indiana has approximately 2 billion trees or 340 trees for each Indiana citizen.
- Private landowners own 85% of Indiana's Forests.
- Current tree growth in Indiana is 3.3 times greater than tree harvest.
- The state tree of Indiana is the Tulip Tree or Yellow-Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*).
- The largest tree in Indiana is a Sycamore tree (*Platanus occidentalis*) in Johnson County, it is 120 feet tall, has a circumference of 301.80 inches, and a crown spread of 109.50 feet.

These tree facts were found on the IDNR web site.

Tree Planting and Care Seminar Scheduled for April 4, 2005.

The St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District is holding a tree planting and care seminar on April 4, 2005 from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. at the St. Joseph County Farm Bureau Building Meeting Room.

The speaker for the seminar will be Bruce Wakeland, Consultant Forester for Wakeland Forestry Consultants. Bruce will provide you with helpful planting techniques and hints on how to properly care for your tree resulting in better growth.

For reservations, please call the office by April 1, 2005 at (574) 291-7444 ext. 3.

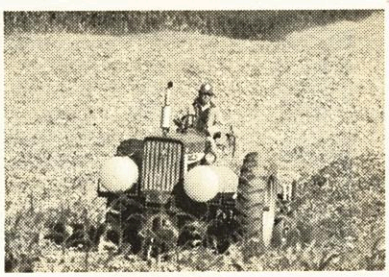
Tree Seminar

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM – REWARDING FARMERS FOR CONSERVATION EFFORTS

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life and other conservation purposes. The first sign-up period in 18 watersheds across the country commenced this summer. Nationwide, nearly 2200 farmers and ranchers have been selected as the first participants of CSP. Closer to home, 112 farmers in Indiana have signed a CSP contract. These contracts last from 5 – 10 years and payments will begin immediately. As Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman stated, "The participating agricultural producers are model conservationists who have set the twin goals of productivity and conservation for their operations."

Secretary Veneman also announced the addition of 202 watersheds to the Conservation Security Program for 2005. CSP will be available each year on a rotational basis in as many watersheds as funding allows. Additional information on CSP is at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov.



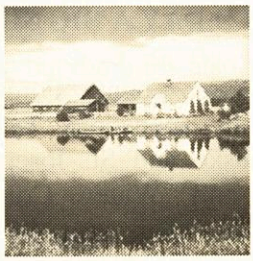
"How do I sign up for these programs I keep hearing about?"

This is a question we are often asked. Signing up for the different USDA conservation programs can be a bit confusing. The following information might help you better understand which program fits your needs the best, and how you should go about signing up.

Sign up any time:

The following programs have open signup all year. For these programs, each application receives a numerical score based on the type and level of treatment. When funding becomes available at the state level, the applications are then ranked against others in the state and the highest ranking applications are funded.

- **Wetland Reserve Program (WRP):** This program is designed to help landowners restore and protect wetlands on their property. Eligible land can receive cost-share and/or easement payments.
- **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP):** The aim of this program is to improve land so it can be better utilized by wildlife. WHIP provides cost-share assistance for the installation of wildlife benefiting practices.
- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** The EQIP program is one which can provide cost-share for producers to install or implement structural and management practices to treat resource concerns such as erosion, water quality, forestry and livestock issues.
- **Grassland Reserve Program (GRP):** The goal of this particular program is to help landowners protect valuable grasslands from conversion to



cropland or other uses by offering rental payments or easements. Cost-share is also available for grazing related practices.

Non-competitive sign up:

The following program has a continuous signup where all applications are automatically accepted provided they meet certain eligibility requirements.

- **The Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous CRP):** This program provides cost-share and rental payments for certain high-priority conservation practices including, but not limited to; grassed waterways, filter strips and windbreaks.

Specific signup period:

The following program has a specific signup period which is announced and publicized as funds become available. Applications are ranked against others in the state based on soil type and planned cover type.

- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):** This program is designed to encourage producers to plant long-term resource conserving covers to improve soil, water and wildlife resources. CRP offers cost-share and rental payments on eligible land.

FIELD NOTES

WHY ARE THE WETLANDS DRY?

We have received many questions from concerned citizens wondering why the wetlands have dried up and why the pond levels are lower. These questions are more frequent after a rain event when it seems the water levels should rise. The answer lies in the precipitation pattern we've been in for at least the last six years. Looking at the climatic data from January 1999 – October 2004 tells the story. Over the last six years, our snowfall/precipitation levels have fallen behind the normal levels. Below is a chart that shows how far behind we are in precipitation amounts since 1999.

Normal Yearly Snowfall	76.5 inches	
Normal Yearly Precipitation	39.7 inches	
	Snowfall ***(Inches)***	**Precipitation** ***(Inches)***
1999	-6.1	-9.0
2000	+28.1	-2.4
2001	-35.9	+.2
2002	-19.6	-10.9
2003	-19.3	-5.1
2004	-16.0	-3.3
Total Deficit 1999 - 2004	-68.8	-30.5

Wetland

Weed Control Important For Wildlife Habitat Establishment

One of the easiest things to overlook when establishing wildlife habitat is weed control. Many people are thinking about what plant species to grow to attract the wildlife they want to see. It is very important to give the plant species the best possible growing conditions, part of which is eliminating competition from weeds.

When planning to plant warm season or cool season grasses it is important to determine if you want to do a no-till seeding or a conventional seeding. This will help determine the method of weed control you will want to use. With both seeding options it is best to start in the fall before you seed the next spring.

The conventional seeding will require the use of tillage equipment. The most common thing is to disk the ground once or twice to kill the existing vegetation. This should be done in the spring just as the weeds are starting to grow and right before planting. This will give the new seeds a chance to germinate before the weeds start growing again. As things begin to grow after planting, it is very important to watch for weeds to begin competing with desired plants. You may have to come back in with a mower and mow the weeds off at a height of 8 inches. This allows sunlight to get to the grasses and it helps control the weeds. The mowing may need to be done a couple of times the first and second years. You can also do some spot spraying with a herbicide to help with weed control.

The no-till seeding requires the use of a herbicide "burndown". A "burndown" is the use of a herbicide or combination of herbicides to kill the existing vegetation before planting the seed.

A burndown can be applied in the fall to help get hard to control weeds, but must be applied in the spring before planting. This will give the desired plants a weed free growing environment to start in.

The no-till drill used to plant the seed will disturb just a small amount of the soil which will help reduce the amount of weeds that start growing. There are millions of weeds seeds in the soil that can germinate with the proper amount of water, light, and seed to soil contact. You will still need to watch the field you planted because there may still be parts of the field that will require spot spraying or mowing as talked about in the conventional seeding.

Wildlife Habitat

Remember it is very important to control weeds when establishing wildlife habitat. If you have questions about weed control or are interested in using a no-till warm season grass drill to get your wildlife habitat established, please contact the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District at (574) 291-7444 ext. 3.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife

In 1987, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began working with private landowners to improve wildlife habitats. Under this program, called Partners for Fish and Wildlife, technical and financial assistance is available. Eligible projects include wetland restorations, native grassland plantings, and riparian corridor improvements. To be considered, projects must benefit federal trust resources such as migratory birds.

Wetland projects typically focus on restoring hydrology to drained sites by cutting field tile, plugging ditches, or constructing earthen dikes. After restoration, migratory birds such as waterfowl and shorebirds benefit from these sites.

Native grasslands, consisting of warm-season grasses and wildflowers (forbs), are often planted in conjunction with a restored or existing wetland. This practice provides nesting habitat for waterfowl and migratory songbirds. If the field to be planted is 5 acres or larger, native grassland plantings not associated with wetlands are eligible because of the benefits provided to migratory songbirds.

Bottomland hardwood tree plantings, riparian corridor improvements, and invasive species control are some of the other types of habitat improvement projects eligible for assistance under the Partners program. Projects on land under existing CRP contracts are also eligible.

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, which is funded by federal tax dollars, is mandated to achieve a 1:1 dollar match between federal and partner funds. Partnerships are crucial to the success of the program. Some partnerships are established under formal agreements. Groups such as Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, IDNR Division of Fish and Wildlife, NRCS, and local SWCD's have entered into cooperative agreements with the USFWS. Some partnerships are simply the one-time contribution of the landowner.

In Indiana, since 1987, well over 1600 projects have been completed improving over 12000 acres of wildlife habitats. St. Joseph County is in the top 12 counties in the state for the number of projects completed. This year, a 10-acre wetland was restored, and a 6-acre prairie was planted. The USFWS is currently working on several additional projects in the county.

In December of 2002, a decision was made to open an office in northern Indiana to provide technical and financial assistance to landowners through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program. Rick Ward, a wildlife biologist with 22 years of experience with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, was hired, and the North Judson Habitat Restoration office (housed at Kankakee State Fish & Wildlife Area) was opened. Currently, 2 full time USFWS biologists serve the state of Indiana and 4 additional biologists provide assistance to private landowners as a portion of their duties.

Plans are underway to add 2 more fulltime biologists in the near future.

Information on the Partners program can be found at http://midwest.fws.gov or by contacting Rick Ward at 574.896.3999 (email rick_ward@fws.gov)

2005 Northern Indiana Grazing Conference
Friday
February 4, 2005
Antique Auction Barn
Shipshewana, Indiana

Scheduled Topics & Speakers Include:

- Economics of Grazing
  Charles Carter, Thorntown, IN
- Extending the Grazing Season
  Dr. Joe Rook, MSU
- Grazing 101
  Jerry Perkins, NRCS
  Victor Shelton, NRCS
- Farmer Panel
  Vernon Byler, LaGrange, IN
  Melvin Helmuth, Nappanee, IN
  Steven Weaver, Bell Center, OH
  Charles Carter, Thorntown, IN

A large trade show with a variety of exhibitors is being planned. Registration forms will be mailed out immediately after Christmas. Registration fee is $20.00 per person & $10.00 for each additional family member.

For more information call : 260-463-3471, ext. 3.

URBAN MEANDERINGS

URBAN WATER QUALITY

Water quality seems to be the major environmental topic of the new century. Pollutants of concern typically include; pesticides, nutrients, sediment, oxygen demanding materials, and bacteria.

Historically, the agricultural community has been blamed for much of our nations water degradation. We frequently hear claims that farmers over-apply chemical and nutrients. Well folks, the urban community is just as much to blame as the farmers. Did you know:

- In the United States, lawns occupy more than any single crop, including wheat, corn, or tobacco.
- Homeowners use 10 times more chemical pesticides per acre than farmers do.
- As much as 60% of water in Western cities is used for lawns: as much as 30% in Eastern cities.
- Of the 34 major pesticides commonly used on lawns, 32 have not been tested for their long-term effects on humans and the environment.

SOURCE: 1993 – "REDISIGNING THE AMERICAN LAWN," THE LAWN INSTITUTE.

Many of the pollutants found in urban runoff are similar to pollutants found in rural runoff. These are "conventional" pollutants such as sediment, nutrients, oxygen demanding materials, and bacteria. In addition, water that runs off city streets, parking lots, rooftops, lawns, and sidewalks are loaded with other kinds of pollutantst – bits of metal from cars and roof gutters, hydrocarbons from vehicle and furnace exhaust, spilled oil and pesticides, pet waste, grass clippings and leaves. This polluted, untreated runoff is generally carried directly to nearby streams and lakes via storm sewer systems.

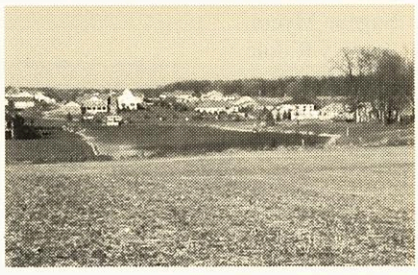
At this juncture, you may be wondering how can these pollutants be removed from storm water runoff. The best solution would be to stop the pollution at its source. But where treatment is needed, the most widely recognized and used best management practice for treating polluted runoff is the detention pond or basin. The way these ponds work is simple. They are designed to hold storm water runoff long enough to allow sediment to settle out. Because many pollutants are attached to sediment particles, most contaminants are removed when the sediment settles to the bottom of the pond. Additionally, pollutants are removed by microorganisms that grow in the ponds.

Detention ponds come in may forms, shapes, and sizes. For example, they may take on the form of a dry pond which is designed to collect storm water runoff and then release it slowly, over a period of 24 to 48 hours, until the pond is dry. On the other hand, they may be designed as wet ponds or wetland areas that have a permanent water level. Wet ponds and wetland areas may or may not release some of the collected storm water runoff. Wet ponds and wetland areas are much more efficient at removing pollutants from storm water runoff.

Regarding pollutant removal, the best design is an oblong pond with the inlet and outlet at opposite ends. With this design, incoming storm water runoff displaces water that has been standing in the pond since the previous storm. If the inlet and outlet are located to close to each other , the incoming runoff may flow right through the pond without displacing the standing water. Then the runoff does not stay in the pond long enough for much sediment to settle out.

Detention ponds are becoming a common site on urban construction sites. Many land developers are using these ponds not only as storm water treatment ponds but also to help minimize flooding of persons who live lower in the watershed. The next time you are traveling through an urban area and see a pond, remember it is there for more than just aesthetic purposes.

If you would like to learn more about detention ponds or any other urban soil conservation best management practice, call us at the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District Office at (574) 291-7444 ext. 3.



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

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.