



St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

July/August 2016
Volume 18, Issue 4

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What's Going On...

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



July

4th - Independence Day - Office Closed

14th - Pasture Walk - Atlee Yutzky- 1660 Beech Rd Nappanee, IN 46540. For more information see page 2.

19th - St. Joseph County SWCD Board Meeting (7:00 pm @ Centre Township Library)

August

5th-21st - Indiana State Fair www.indianastatefair.com/state-fair/

11th - Pasture Walk - Daniel Schrock-10225 W 100 S Middlebury, IN 46540. For more information see page 2.

16th - St. Joseph County SWCD Board Meeting (7:00 pm @ Centre Township Library)

September

5th - Labor Day - Office Closed

8th - Pasture Walk - TBA - For more information see page 2.

20th - St. Joseph County SWCD Board Meeting (7:00 pm @ Centre Township Library)

Legislator Conservation Tour



On Thursday June 9, 2016 the St. Joseph County SWCD & NRCS hosted a Legislator Conservation Tour for our local, state and federal legislators. During

the Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) annual conference, our supervisors met with the state legislators at the statehouse. The legislators were interested to see the conservation practices St. Joseph County is implementing with the aid of local, state & federal funding.



During the tour we were able to share many examples of the conservation practices on the ground in St. Joseph County such as; no-till, cover crops, filter strips, irrigation & nutrient management, wetlands & prairie plantings, and prescribed grazing, just to name a few.

We want to thank all the legislators who took time out of their busy schedules to see first hand the conservation of our natural resources St. Joseph County is able to preserve for future generations.

Thank you to our 2016 donors who helped to sponsor our tour.



Front Row left to right: Brian Spaulding, Esq. - District Director/General Counsel Congresswoman Jackie Walorski, Debbie Knepp NRCS, Kimberly Neumann NRCS Area Conservationist, Sarah Longenecker SWCD, Brandon Herget - Deputy State Director Office of U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly, Charlotte Wolfe
Second Row left to right: Indiana State Representative Tim Wesco, Rick Glassman SWCD, John Doods SWCD, Rebecca Holwerda from the Office of U.S. Senator Dan Coats, Mike Burkholder SWCD, Robert Wolfe
Photo taken by Sandra Hoffarth - St. Joseph County SWCD

2015 survey results show steady increase in cover crops

Indianapolis, IN, April 20, 2016

Results from the 2015 Indiana Fall Tillage and Cover Crop Transect, which is an on-the-ground survey, indicate that overall soil health in Indiana is improving. According to the data, over 1.1 million acres of cover crops were planted in 2015, which is an increase of nearly 10 percent compared to the previous year and 225 times more coverage over the past decade.

Cover crops build soil organic matter, protect against soil erosion, cycle nutrients, reduce compaction, sequester carbon from the atmosphere, and build overall soil health and make it more resilient to weather extremes. The increase of cover crops confirms that the Indiana Conservation Partnership's efforts are helping farmers successfully improve soil health throughout the state.

"We introduced the cover crop assessment to the survey in 2011 so that we could better tell the story of Indiana's conservation efforts," said Jane Hardisty, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist. "Cover crops protect soil from extreme weather and retain valuable nutrients in fields during winter months, playing a key role in

soil health. With more farmers implementing this practice, the 2015 survey results prove why Indiana continues to be a national leader in soil health."

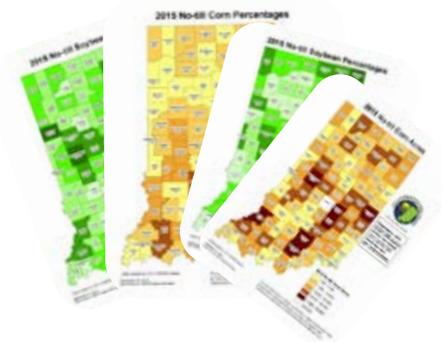
Hoosier farmers also continued the trend of plowing less and using sound conservation practices that preserve valuable topsoil, according to the 2015 data. Not plowing the soil is a critical component to improving soil health and can reduce soil erosion by 75 percent when compared to a conventional tillage system. The results show that 55 percent of Indiana's harvested cropland was left undisturbed during the winter months.

"When our farmers apply sound conservation practices, it's good for the soil, contributes to improved water quality, and good for the future of agriculture," said Ted McKinney, Director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). "These survey results indicate that not only are more farmers implementing these types of practices, which means that soil health is improving, but also that Indiana has a conservation model that works and continues to garner national attention."

In addition to the survey, which provides data on no-till farming

and cover crops, the eight partners of Indiana's Conservation Partnership also promote other practices as part of a *soil health management system*. This system combines practices such as adaptive nutrient management, integrated weed and pest management, diverse crop rotations, precision farming technology, and prescriptive buffers to improve soil function and make land more sustainable.

To learn more about Indiana's conservation efforts, please visit icp.iaswcd.org, or to find the tillage transect for your county, contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District office by visiting www.stjospehswcd.org. Additionally, ISDA maintains tillage transect reports dating back to 1990 on their website www.in.gov/isda/2383.htm which also includes the most recent transect results.



2016 Pasture Walks

One of the ways Management Intensive Rotational Grazing has gained acceptance and following is through an active Pasture Walk program. Beginning in 1998, rotational grazers from the area have gathered on grazing farms for an informal tour. The groups discuss soil, weather conditions, forages, paddock arrangements, livestock varieties, breeds and genetics, watering systems, feeding practices, building arrangement, milking and farm equipment. Much of the interest in rotational grazing in the region still comes from dairymen, however the management system has been applied and adapted to all manner of livestock raising: beef cattle, poultry, sheep, goats, and even "exotics" like bison, llamas and alpacas. The Pasture Walk host describes what he does on his farm and gives the attendees a chance to ask questions or offer advice or, as is more usual, both.



Pasture Walks take place from May through October every year, on the second Thursday afternoon of each month. The program is coordinated by the LaGrange County SWCD. NRCS personnel support and attend the programs and provide expertise and technical information. Most importantly, Pasture Walks are attended and supported by local livestock grazers, who come to each program with both questions and advice, good experiences and bad, and an intimate knowledge of what works...and what doesn't!

2016 SCHEDULE:

July 14 - Atlee Yutzy 1660 Beech Rd Nappanee, IN 46540

August 11 - Daniel Schrock 10225 W 100 S

Middlebury, IN 46540

September 8 TBA

October 13 - Devon Yoder- 6805 W 400 S Topeka, IN 46571

for more details see

www.lagrange-swcd.wix.com/lagrangewcd

How College Catapults Students to Ag Careers

By: Ann Bartuska, Deputy Under Secretary, Research, Education, and Economics with USDA, *Gracie Valdez explains how traveling around the world helped her to want to pursue a career in international agricultural development and trade.*

Growing up, the question of the day often started with “why” or “how” because I loved discovering things. Though my specific interests morphed from archaeology to geology to biology, I knew I wanted to be a scientist since the 5th grade. In college, I chose to study biology, which exposed me to many different aspects of the field. College was the springboard that sharpened my focus and led me to becoming the ecosystem ecologist I am today. Recognizing National College Signing Day, I hope that today’s inbound students consider studying science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) subjects to help meet our future agricultural challenges.

So many things start with just the sheer recognition that much of our future professional workforce is dependent upon people who are trained

in the STEM fields. There are now a significant number of farmers who use high technology and remote sensing data for precision crop management. That means there are opportunities for people in professions like computer science, engineering, and environmental science to help change the world. At USDA, our scientists are doing everything from developing satellites to measure the moisture content of soil from 50 miles above the earth, to using drones to determine the most efficient and environmentally responsible way to water and fertilize crops.

At USDA, we’re looking at how we can promote the pipeline of STEM students across the board from, as we often say, “K through 80,” which is lifelong learning.

USDA supports education in all 50 states and territories through a variety of programs and grants, such as our curriculum-based “Ag in the Classroom” program, and our investment in 4-H clubs. Through our National Institute for Food and Agriculture, we have numerous grant programs that specifically target higher

education. For example, the Higher Education Challenge Grants program specifically encourages innovative projects that support agricultural science education. And NIFA’s Education and Literacy initiative tries to bring ideas and support for educational activities into our own science and research grants. Also, almost every agency promotes internships that bring interested students and teachers to our laboratories to get hands-on research experience.

Whether a community college or an ‘Ivy League’ school, we congratulate all of the students that are taking the next step in their careers by going to college. And for those that are undecided on their course of study, I urge you to consider careers in agriculture. STEM occupations are projected to grow by 17 percent from 2008 to 2018, so your chances are great to join the next generation of food, ag and natural resource scientists. You may be the creator of the new innovation in agriculture the world is waiting for.

Conservation Speakers Available for your small Group

Are you looking for a fun, educating speaker for your small group meeting? The St. Joseph County Partnership staff is available to speak about many topics relating to soil & water conservation including soil health, cover crops, no-till, nutrient management, rain gardens, & local watersheds just to name a few. The partnership staff have spoke at Unity Gardens Growing Summit, Lions Clubs, Farm Bureau meetings, & Izaak Walton, among many others.

Partnership Staff Speakers Available:

- **Rick Glassman** is the SWCD Environmental Educator Coordinator and has been with the district since 1990.
- **Sarah Longenecker** is the SWCD County Conservationist since the fall of 2014. She was the Administrative Assistant prior to accepting her new role and started with the district in the spring of 2013.
- **Debbie Knepp** is the NRCS District Conservationist and has been with NRCS since 1983.
- **James Rodriguez** is the NRCS Soil Conservationist and has been with NRCS full time since 2013. Prior he was an intern since the summer of 2009.



To find out more or to schedule a presentation, contact the St. Joseph County SWCD at 574-936-2024 Ext. 4 or info@stjosephswcd.org.



ST JOSEPH COUNTY
 SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
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St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership

In an effort to pass the conservation torch and help educate the next generation on being good stewards of our environment, the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District provides nature/environmental education programs for classrooms all over St. Joseph County. Our Environmental Education Coordinator's calendar for the 2016-2017 school year will open up on August 10. There are more than 25 topics to choose from, including hands on programs and field trips! The programs are very affordable and a limited amount of grants are available as well. To schedule programs for your class or school please email Rick at Richard.glassman@in.nacdnet.net (**best way**) or call our office at 574-936-2024, ext. 4. ****Please note that his calendar fills up quickly so email or call soon to get the dates you'd like for your program!**

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 Debbie Knepp, NRCS
 James Rodriguez, NRCS

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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!

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