

Conservation District Business Plan

Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District

I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving
– Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

Who We Are:

Statutory Authority – Indiana Code IC 14-32-5-1 (District Law) A district constitutes a governmental subdivision of the state and a public body exercising public powers. A 1948 referendum by the people of Steuben County established our Conservation District. The current full-time staff positions, Administrative Coordinator and Resource Conservationist, are funded by Steuben County Government.

What We Do:

- **We serve Steuben County residents and land owners, the general public, public officials, and businesses.**
- **Identify and prioritize local soil and water resource concerns.**
- **Provide the public information about soil, water and related natural resource conservation.**
- **Connect land users to sources of educational, technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices and technologies.**

Mission Statement:

We will be the lead facilitator who ensures that the natural resources of Steuben County are used wisely and are there for future generations.

Core Values:

We desire to accomplish our mission through providing excellent personal service and facilitating voluntary participation by our residents/land users to put conservation practices on the land.

Key Partners:

Our key partners help provide educational, technical and financial assistance to land users for implementing conservation practices and technologies on the land and/or provide direct financial support for district staffing and program operations.

We all work together to accomplish our goals for improving soil and water quality.

- **We are part of the Indiana Conservation Partnership including:**
 - **USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service**
 - **USDA Farm Service Agency**
 - **Indiana State Department of Agriculture – Division of Soil Conservation**
 - **Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts**
 - **Indiana Department of Natural Resources**
 - **Indiana Department of Environmental Management**
 - **State Soil Conservation Board**
 - **Purdue Cooperative Extension Service**

- **Other key partners include:**
 - **Steuben County Government**
 - **City of Angola and surrounding towns**
 - **City of Angola/Trine University MS4**
 - **Trine University**
 - **The Nature Conservancy**
 - **Wood-Land-Lakes Resource Conservation & Development**
 - **Steuben County Lakes Council and Area Lake Associations**
 - **Other Soil and Water Conservation Districts**
 - **Landowners and Producers**

Critical Natural Resource Issues – Involving rural, urban and aquatic issues:

1. Water quality

- **Excessive use of fertilizer and pesticide**
 - **E-coli**
 - **Dissolved reactive phosphorus**
- **Sediment loads**
- **Failed septic systems and combined sewer overflows**

2. Soil health

- **Soil erosion**
- **Tillage practices**
- **Depletion of organic matter**
- **Increased compaction**

3. Land use issues

- **Loss of farmland, wetlands, and woodlands**
- **Urban sprawl and development**
- **Loss of wildlife habitat**

4. Drainage issues

- **Flooding**
- **Subsurface drainage maintenance**

5. Invasive/Exotic Species

- **Insects**
- **Herbaceous**
- **Aquatic**

Critical Geographic areas (See map on last page):

County-wide problems – Water Quality/Soil Erosion, Field Tile Maintenance, Failed Septic Systems, Fertilizer, Pesticides and Nutrient management, and Urban Sprawl and Development. Critical areas include all watersheds in the county: Pigeon Creek, Crooked Creek (Fawn River), Fish Creek, Turkey Creek, and St. Joe River, with prime focus concentrating on the Western Lake Erie Basin (Multi-County) and Pigeon Creek Watersheds. Apollo Landfill within the Fish Creek watershed is also a critical area.

How we plan to address these critical issues in the next five years:

1. Water Quality/Soil Health:

- **Increase awareness of soil erosion issues – sediment reduction**
- **Apply conservation practices in watersheds.**
- **Promote No-Till (multi-county)**
- **Promote temporary seeding at construction sites**
- **Promote cover crops / hay plantings**
- **Assist in water quality monitoring throughout the county**

2. Subsurface Drainage Maintenance:

- **Work with county drainage board to research funding to repair/replace tile on outdated, undersized systems.**
- **Promote surface inlet replacement (i.e. Blind Inlets).**

3. Failed Septic Systems:

- **Work with State and Local officials to evaluate alternative systems.**
- **Research funding for failed systems in County.**
- **Educate landowners on installation and maintenance of private systems.**

4. Fertilizer/Pesticide/Nutrient Management:

- **Increase public awareness related to urban/rural application.**
- **Agricultural storage and containment**
- **Manure/Fertilizer management**
- **Rotational grazing**
- **Fencing – exclusion and grazing**

5. Urban Sprawl and Development:

- **Assist city and county planning departments with future developments (i.e. – participate in design review, MS4 advisory group)**
- **Educational seminars for contractors and landowners.**
- **Work with Wood-Land-Lakes Resource Conservation and Development to promote conservation easements.**

All of these critical issues involve applying conservation practices on the land. Some of the conservation practices we plan to implement to help us achieve these goals over the next five years include installing:

- **375 acres of filter strips**
- **375 acres of pasture/hayland plantings**
- **10,000 feet of grassed waterways**
- **250 acres of tree plantings**
- **30,000 feet of fencing**
- **10 wetland developments**
- **5,500 acres of conservation farm plans**
- **3,500 acres of cover crops**

Key Strategies:

1) Information – We will provide information to the public through:

- **Newsletters and other publications**
- **Website**
- **One on one office contact with public**
- **Annual Meeting**
- **Partnership Contacts**

2) Education – We will provide education to the public through:

- **Workshops**
- **Field Days (Youth Conservation Field Day)**
- **Presentations / Displays**
- **Office contacts (providing soil surveys, planning specs, tree planting info, etc.)**

3) Marketing – We will reach out to the public through:

- **Public Presentations**
- **News Releases to local Media**
- **Website**
- **Newsletters (The Conservator and Annual Report)**
- **Offsite displays**
- **Customer Service – promoting various conservation programs that are available.**

4) Technical Assistance –

- **One on one conservation planning and application assistance by field office staff**
- **Survey, design and installation assistance by regional tech team**
- **Assistance to county government (i.e. Design Review committee and MS4 Advisory Council)**

5) Financial Assistance –

- **Federal Conservation Programs (Farm Bill, Great Lakes Commission)**
- **State Conservation cost share/incentive programs (IDNR Lake and River Enhancement)**
- **Partnership Programs**
- **County appropriations**

- **State Grants (Clean Water Indiana)**
- **IDEM 319 grants**
- **Other grants, foundations, etc.**
- **Affiliate Memberships**
- **NRCS (phones, computer, copier, printers, and networking)**

6) Accountability – Measuring success

- **Tally Sheet – Customer Service**
- **Annual Report**
- **NRCS progress report**
- **GIS project layer**
- **Reports to County Officials**
- **Evaluations – annual review of Staff and Supervisors**

Desired Outcomes:

All residents and land users of the county will better understand how their activities on the land impact natural resources and subsequently how soil health and water quality are achieved, thereby promoting future conservation practices.

- **Agricultural producers and landowners work towards full implementation of their conservation plan.**
- **Contractors, rural, and urban landowners work to implement approved conservation practices on their property.**
- **County planners and developers to consider the impact of development and recognize the need to protect the natural resources within the district.**

Steuben County Critical Geographic Areas

Watersheds and other Critical Areas

