



Volume 42 Issue 1

Winter 2019

Steuben County, IN Soil & Water Conservation District

2018 Annual Report

Watersheds: Our Water, Our Home

**SAVE THE
DATE**
**69th Annual
Meeting**

March 13, 2019
Angola
Christian Church
(details on page 4)

2018 Steuben County SWCD Poster Contest Winner (see page 8)



*Conserving the Natural
Resources of Steuben County
for Future Generations!*

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Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District to be the lead facilitator who ensures that the natural resources of Steuben County are used wisely and are there for future generations.

Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District

STAFF

Janel S. Meyer Administrative Coordinator
Tara M. Lee Resource Conservationist

Natural Resource Conservation Service

STAFF

Jennifer Walker Acting District
Conservationist
Arthur Franke Soil Conservationist

Technical specialists from the USDA-NRCS work directly with the SWCD providing technical assistance on a daily basis.

2018 Board of Supervisors

Thomas J. Green Chairman
Zachary Martin Vice Chairman
Gene A. Diehl
Craig Holman
Chuck Howard

2018 Associate Supervisors

Tim Groosbeck
Kayleen Hart

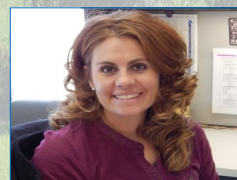
Do you have an interest in assisting the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District with accomplishing our mission?
Join our team as an Associate Supervisor!
Contact the office for details.



Pictured left to right: Zachary Martin, Vice Chairman; Tom Green, Chairman; Janel Meyer, Administrative Coordinator; Gene Diehl (seated), SWCD Board Supervisor; Craig Holman, SWCD Board Supervisor; Arthur Franke, NRCS Soil Conservationist; and Tara Lee, Resource Conservationist (photo by Kate Sanders)



Chuck Howard
Board Supervisor



Jennifer Walker
Acting District Conservationist

History of the Steuben County SWCD

The Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was organized by landowners in 1948 and is a legal subdivision of the State of Indiana established by the Indiana Soil Conservation Act of 1937.

The District is managed by a board of five local supervisors, who are Steuben County residents familiar with the conservation needs and opportunities in the county. Three are elected by Steuben County landowners, and two are appointed by the Indiana State Soil Conservation Board based on a recommendation from current Supervisors. Associate Supervisors are appointed annually, by the SWCD Board, to assist in activities and programs sponsored by the SWCD. Both Board and Associate Supervisors serve the Steuben community on a volunteer basis. Steuben County Government funds the two full-time staff positions.

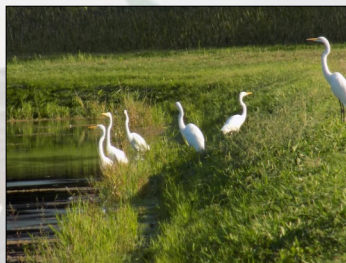
- We serve Steuben County residents and landowners, the general public, public officials, and businesses.
- Identify and prioritize local soil and water resource concerns.
- Provide the public information about soil, water and related natural resource conservation.
- Connect land users to sources of educational, technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices and technologies.
- We will encourage a broader understanding of everyone's dependence upon soil, water and related resources.
- We will secure and effectively coordinate services and funds available from local, state and federal agencies and from private organizations and groups.
- **District activities and programs will be made available to all citizens, on a non-discriminatory basis.**

Across the United States, nearly 3,000 conservation districts - almost one in every county - are helping people conserve land, water, forests, wildlife and related natural resources.

Conservation Districts serve as the local hub for connecting land users to direct sources of educational, financial, and technical assistance for applying conservation practices and best management technologies on the land to address soil and water quality problems.

“Our ideals, laws and customs should be based on the proposition that each generation, in turn, becomes the custodian rather than the absolute owner of our resources and each generation has the obligation to pass this inheritance on to the future”

- Charles A. Lindbergh



Photos by Janel Meyer

SAVE THE DATE
March 13, 2019

Steuben County SWCD 69th Annual Meeting

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Doors open at 5:45 PM

Angola Christian Church

1297 N 200 W, Angola, IN 46703

Dinner at 6:00 p.m.

Annual Meeting at 6:30 p.m.

The annual meeting is free and begins at 6:30 PM.
 It will be preceded by dinner, starting at 6:00 PM.

Cost for the buffet meal, catered by Auntie V's,
 is \$7.00 per person.

Tickets are required.

Please RSVP by Thursday, March 7, 2019

For tickets contact:

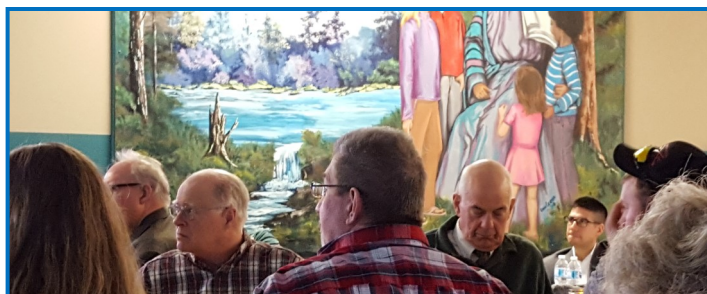
Steuben County SWCD

1220 N 200 W, STE L; Angola, IN 46703

(260) 665-3211, ext. 3

“Importance of Soil Health” Presentation By Stephanie McLain

Stephanie is the Indiana USDA NRCS State Soil Health Specialist. She grew up on a row crop and dairy farm near Leota, Minnesota. Stephanie graduated from Southwest Minnesota State University with a degree in Environmental Science and Agronomy. She has worked in multiple states in her career offering her the opportunity to gain invaluable experience and form meaningful relationships across the country. Stephanie has been with the Indiana NRCS for 1 year and lives in Brownsburg with her husband of 22 years and their two daughters.



Right Product(s)/ Source(s)	Right Rate	Right Time	Right Place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balanced fertilization (N, P, K, secondary and micronutrients) Nutrient form (urea, nitrate, ammonium) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil testing Yield goal analysis Crop removal balance Plant tissue analysis Crop inspection Record keeping Variable-rate application technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application timing Slow- and controlled-release fertilizers Urease and nitrification inhibitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application method Incorporation of fertilizer Applicator maintenance and calibration

On March 14, 2018, community members joined the SWCD at the Angola Christian Church for our 68th annual meeting. Greg Meyers from The Andersons, Inc. Plant Nutrient Group was the keynote speaker. Greg's presentation "*The 4Rs: Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time, Right Place*" focused on the importance of properly managed fertilizers and the 4R Nutrient Stewardship framework to achieve cropping system goals, such as increased production, increased farmer profitability, enhanced environmental protection, and improved sustainability. The Andersons is a proud partner of 4R Nutrient Stewardship. The Waterloo, Indiana facility became the first in Indiana to become 4R certified in June of 2016. This voluntary certification program is a concentrated effort by the agriculture industry to significantly reduce and prevent nutrient runoff.

We were honored to have Jorge Ortiz (Regional Director to US Senator Joe Donnelly), Chris Crabtree (District Director to US Representative Jim Banks), and Commissioners Ron Smith and Lynne Liechty join us.

2018 Financial Report:

Receipts

State—Clean Water Indiana (CWI) Matching Grant for District Operation	\$10,000.00
All other CWI Grant Funds	\$23,277.00
County for District Operations*	\$16,000.00
Federal Funds	\$0
State Funds—Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) Watershed Land Treatment Grants	\$18,617.90
Non-Government Grants (Ralph E. Taylor Conservation Fund through Steuben Community Foundation)	\$500.00
Workshop/Field Day Income—Steuben County Life and Conservation Camp	\$1,270.00
Donations	\$1,993.00
Annual Meeting Income	\$130.00
Reimbursements/Refunds/Sponsorships	\$1,726.87
Sales Income: Flags	\$70.00
Interest on Savings Account	\$67.90
Total Income	\$73,652.67
Balance brought forward from 2017	\$44,032.52

TOTAL RECEIPTS **\$117,685.19**

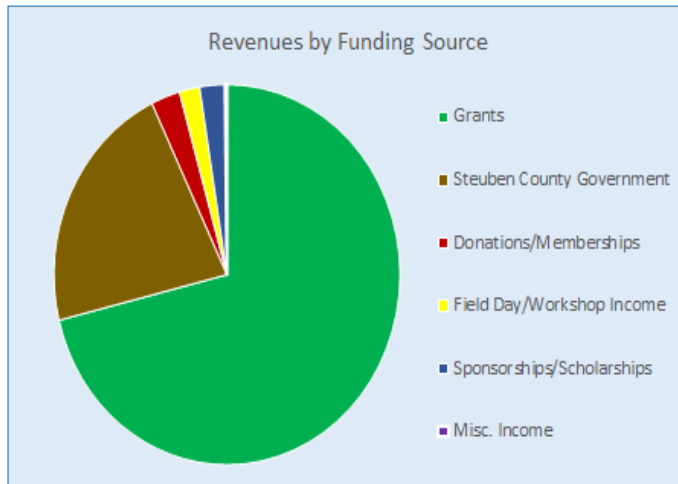
Disbursements

Annual Meeting Expense	\$744.64
Clean Water Indiana Projects	\$10,547.31
Conservation Education Programs	\$4,114.07
Contractual Services	\$1,518.00
Cost-Share Projects—Federally funded	\$183.20
Cost-Share Projects—State funded—LARE	\$20,331.36
Dues and Subscriptions	\$3,379.95
Office Supplies	\$482.24
Other Services and Charges	\$0
Postage	\$1,395.25
Printing/Copying Expense	\$4,483.07
Sales Tax paid to department of revenue for flag sales	\$4.17
Travel/Lodging/Mileage/Registration/Meals	\$2,111.76
Workshop/Field Day Expense—Steuben County Life	\$896.01
District Vehicle - Fuel, Repairs, and Maintenance	\$1,941.49
Computer Expenses (Web Hosting)	\$120.00
Insurance	\$932.00
Other Disbursements: TNC Creel Ditch Refund	\$3,700.00
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$56,884.52
Balance in Checking at December 31, 2018	\$60,732.77
Petty Cash	\$100.00
Savings Account	\$41,684.61

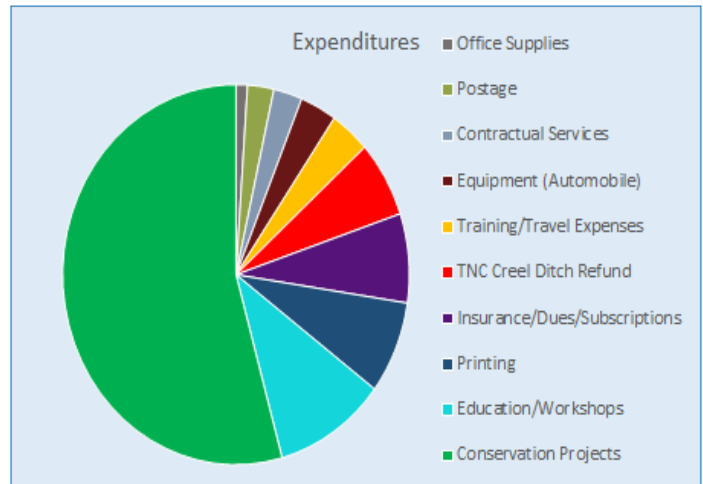
** In addition to the grant for District Operations, the County directly paid the salary of the two District staff members.*

2018 Financial Report *(continued from page 5)*

Revenues by Funding Source



Expenditures



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR 2018 AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Angola Seed & Supply, LLC (Angola, IN)
 Aquatic Enhancement & Survey, Inc. (Angola, IN)
 Carper Farm Supply, Inc. (Ashley, IN)
 City of Angola/Trine University MS4
 Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy (Fremont, IN)
 Jerome & Lynn Chandler (Angola, IN)
 Bill & Diana Clingan (Hudson, IN)
 Daft Erosion Control LLC (Ada, OH)
 Tom & Marilyn Deweese (Angola, IN)
 Edon Farmers Co-Op (Edon, OH)
 Mary Alice & Tom Filbrun (Angola, IN)
 Tom Green Engineering (Angola, IN)
 Hoham Feed & Seed (Auburn, IN)

Mel & Sandy Hathaway (Fremont, IN)
 Kevin Northup Excavating (LaGrange, IN)
 Lake George Conservancy (Coldwater, MI)
 Lake James Association (Angola, IN)
 Moody and Crew, LLC (Fremont, IN)
 Peter Mountz (Garrett, IN)
 Sue A. Myers (Angola, IN)
 Sandhill Environmental Services, LLC (Angola, IN)
 Sheets LP Gas, L.P. (Angola, IN)
 Steuben County Lakes Council (Angola, IN)
 Stroh Farm Supply (Stroh, IN)
 John Williamson (Angola, IN)

The District Board ***gratefully*** acknowledges its 2018 Affiliate Members. The donations received from these individuals and businesses help support the Information and Education programs of the District. There is still time to renew your membership for 2019, or to become a new supporter of conservation in Steuben County. If you or your business would like to become an Affiliate Member, please complete the 2019 Affiliate Membership Form on the back page and mail it with your check or money order to:

Steuben County SWCD
 1220 N 200 W, STE L
 Angola, IN 46703

Our Conservation Partners:

The SWCD Board and office staff would like to acknowledge and thank the numerous agencies, organizations, and private citizens who supported SWCD programs and activities during 2018.



PURDUE EXTENSION



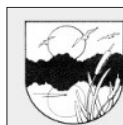
**Steuben
County**
INDIANA



TRINE
UNIVERSITY



**Crowe
Forest Management
LLC**



Steuben County Lakes Council



**THE HERALD
REPUBLICAN**

Special Thanks to:

Steuben County Lakes Council for sponsoring:

- **Activity booklets for local 1st & 2nd grade students within the County promoting annual Stewardship Week.
- **"Learn About Water Conservation" educational booklet for 4th grade students within the County as part of our Youth Education program.

City of Angola/Trine University MS4 for sponsoring:

- **Storm Water Activity Booklet for 4th grade students as part of our Youth Education program.

Bill Geiger, Jack and Karen Horrell, Bob and Nancy Webster, and Don Luepke for providing boat

transportation to Kasota Island.

Angola Christian Church, Camp Whitley, Clear Lake Yacht Club, G.W. Stroh Orchard, Cheryl and Brad Hamlin, Bridget Harrison and David Drogos, Par Gil Learning Center, Peabody Library, Pokagon State Park/Trine State Recreation Area, Potawatomi Inn, Steuben County Economic Development Corporation, Steuben County Government, The Andersons Inc., Trine University and Whitney Commons for providing workshop facilities.

All of the presenters that assisted with the SWCD's 2018 youth and adult education programs.

Educational Activities

The SWCD is committed to informing the community about conservation issues by providing and assisting our conservation partners with various adult and youth education to promote stewardship of our natural resources. We thank the landowners, businesses, agencies, and organizations for their assistance and support.

YOUTH Programs

2

- ◇ **Prairie Heights Water Ecology Day**

- ◇ **Regional Enviro-thon**

0

- ◇ **Tri-State/Trine Regional Science Fair**

- ◇ **Soil and Water Stewardship Week**
Stewardship Week Presentations
at Carlin Park & Ryan Park Elementary

- ◇ **Stewardship Week Poster Contest**

1

- ◇ **Conservation Camps in LaGrange, Steuben
& Whitley Counties**

- ◇ **Steuben County 4-H Fair**

8

- ◇ **Steuben County Fishing Workshop**

- ◇ **LaGrange/Steuben Soils Judging Contest**

- ◇ **Youth Conservation Field Day**

- ◇ **Prairie Heights Geocache Day**

- ◇ **Duck Days**



Christina Minick with her 1st-grade Ryan Park Elementary School students—2018 SWCD poster contest winners.

ADULT Programs

- ◇ **Steuben SWCD 68th Annual Meeting**

- ◇ **PARP Workshops**

- ◇ **Spring Garden Series**

- ◇ **Earth Fest**

- ◇ **Rain Garden Demonstration Workshop**

- ◇ **INfield Advantage (INFA)**

- ◇ **Agronomy Field Day**

- ◇ **Purdue Extension Rain Garden Tour**

- ◇ **Steuben County Life Classes**

- ◇ **Forestry Field Day**

- ◇ **Contractor Workshop**

Other Activities: annual tree program • wildlife food plot seed • Tillage Transect Surveys (spring and fall) • Hoosier Riverwatch Water Monitoring Kits

2018 Tri-State Regional Science Fair Soil and Water Conservation Award Winners

- Jacob Foster (*Soil Erosion*); Fremont Elementary School.
- Cody Collins (*Growing Up I-0-I*); Eastside Junior/Senior High School.
- Atticus Reffner (*Composting Food and Its Effects on the Chemistry of the Soil*); DeKalb High School.





Mark Your Calendars for the **2019 Agronomy Field Day** **July 16, 2019**

ALL PRODUCERS WELCOME!!

Hosted by: The Andersons Inc. in cooperation with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of DeKalb County, Steuben County, and Williams County, OH and Purdue Extension

Located at:
The Andersons Waterloo Ag Center
4743 County Rd 28, Waterloo, IN 46793
1-800-988-8091



Conservation Land Treatment *A Watershed Approach:*

Why a watershed approach? We all live in watershed - the area that drains to a common waterway, such as a stream, lake, wetland - and our individual actions can directly affect it. Working together using a watershed approach can help protect our valuable water resources. For over 70 years, the District has worked with conservation partners to make millions of dollars available to Steuben County landowners to help clean and conserve soil, water and related natural resources.

Current Grant Funding:

<u>Grant</u>	<u>Partner Agency</u>	<u>Affected Area</u>
2017 Clean Water Indiana Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Grant (2017 CWI)	Indiana State Dept. of Ag. DeKalb County SWCD	All of Steuben County (<i>priority area—headwaters of the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB)</i>)
2018 Clean Water Indiana Urban Conservation Grant (2018 CWI)	Indiana State Dept. of Ag.	All of Steuben County (<i>urban residential area located on or within 1/2-mile of a river, lake, shore, or perennial stream</i>)
District Cost-Share Program (DCS)		All of Steuben County
Pigeon Creek Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program (PC)	Great Lakes Commission	Priority sub-watersheds including Pigeon Lake-Pigeon Creek, Mud Creek-Pigeon Creek, and Long Lake-Pigeon Creek
Fawn River Lake and River Enhancement Program—Watershed Land Treatment Grant (Fawn LARE)	Indiana DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife	Priority sub-watersheds of Fawn River including Snow Lake, Lake James-Crooked Creek, Tamarack Lake, Town of Orland, and Himebaugh Drain (Steuben County)
USDA Farm Bill Programs	Natural Resources Conservation Service Farm Service Agency	All of Steuben County
Clean Water Indiana District Support Grant	Indiana State Dept. of Ag. State Soil Conservation Board	All of Steuben County

“Conservation means development as much as it does protection. I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use the generations that come after us.”

– Theodore Roosevelt

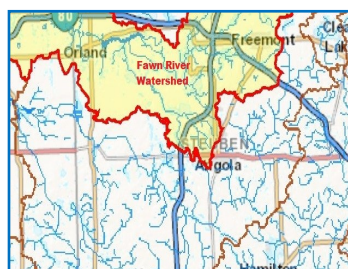
Summary of Conservation Practices¹ installed in Steuben County through SWCD Grants 2018

<div> <div>Estimated Sediment & Nutrient Reduction</div> <div>(lbs./year)</div> </div>					
Watershed/ 2018 Installed Practices	Program	Amount ²	Total tons Sediment Reduced	Total lbs. Phosphorus Reduced	Total lbs. Nitrogen Reduced
Fawn River Watershed					
Conservation Cover	2017 CWI	0.5 acres	152	170	341
Conservation Cover	DCS	1,800 ft ²	1	0	1
Cover Crops	2017 CWI	200 acres	762	712	1,426
Critical Area Planting	Fawn LARE	1.3 acres	9	8	16
Filter Strip	Fawn LARE	0.6 acres	156	149	298
Forage/Biomass Planting	Fawn LARE	25 acres	122	116	232
Pigeon Creek Watershed ³					
Cover Crops	PC	221 acres	725	813	1,625
W. Branch/Upper St. Joe / Fish Creek					
Cover Crops	2017 CWI	25 acres	108	114	229
Rain Garden	2018 CWI	219ft ²	58	<1	3

¹2017 CWI = 2017 Clean Water Indiana Grant w/DeKalb Co. SWCD; DCS = District Cost-Share Program; Fawn LARE = Fawn River Lake and River Enhancement Program; PC = Pigeon Creek Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program

²The acreage reported in the above table is the total acreage a program/grant paid in cost-share funds; this number does not include the total acreage of practices the producer/landowner applied to their land or operation. Due to program/grant acreage caps, actual acreage of conservation practices installed may be greater. Conservation practices installed only includes those funded through SWCD grants and does not include any USDA-funded programs.

³Two cost-share contracts, obligated in 2018, under the Pigeon Creek Great Lakes and Sediment Nutrient Grant were not completed due to the extended cold and wet Northeastern Indiana weather this past spring. Both projects have been rescheduled for spring 2019 implementation.



Fawn River



Pigeon Creek



W. Branch St. Joe



Fish Creek



Conservation Programs

Steuben County Natural Resources and Conservation Services (NRCS) provided another great year supporting land-owners in the county and helping them address resource concerns on their land. USDA-NRCS provides technical and financial assistance through the Agricultural Act of 2014 which includes the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). The information provided below includes funds obligated for FY18 EQIP Applications.

Brush Management 89.9 acres	Conservation Cover Pollinator Habitat 37.7 acres	Cover Crops 606.4 acres	Fencing 3,098 ft.
Forestry 252 acres Forest Management Plans 20.3 acres Timber Stand Improvement 16.9 acres Tree Establishment	Forage/Biomass Planting 9.2 acres	Comprehensive Nutrient Management 1 plan	41 EQIP Applications for FY 2019



INfield Advantage (INFA)

Our local INfield Advantage (INFA) group held its Winter Meeting on February 15, 2019. At the meeting, attendees discussed the 2018 growing season and the new INfield Advantage Soybean Project. Led by meeting facilitator Meg Leader (INFA State Coordinator), the participants came away with some ideas about their crop management.

INfield Advantage works with small regional groups of farmers who are interested in improving their nutrient use efficiency on their corn fields. They share management decisions and the resulting impact those decisions had on their production, with a goal of creating personalized local guidance for future management innovations. This year the program completed its eighth year and continues to be one of the largest adaptive nutrient management farmer networks in the country. In 2018, there were 33 active regional groups located across more than 60 Indiana counties. State-wide, nearly

1,100 fields, over 70,000 acres, were monitored using the IN-field Advantage tools. Those fields included over 100 soybean fields. Based on a participant survey, the participants have a direct impact on the management of over a half a million cropland acres across the state.

The Steuben County group continued working in 2018. Our group was formed by local growers to improve their nitrogen use efficiency in corn. This year, we had 7 local growers participate. Our local group is part of the state-wide program coordinated by the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). More information about the program can be found at: www.INfieldAdvantage.org

In corn fields, INFA uses aerial imagery and the Corn Stalk Nitrate Test (CSNT) to study nitrogen use efficiency in each field enrolled. Producers are not restricted on tillage, rotation, nitrogen form, timing or rate and may enroll multiple fields.

(continued on page 13)

INField Advantage *(continued from page 12)*

The basic level of the program is called Guided Stalk Sampling (GSS). Growers may also use INFA to conduct on-farm research using Replicated Strip Trials (RST).

The new soybean study worked with Dr. Casteel, Purdue University, exploring the yield impact of applying sulfur on soybeans by using a check strip approach. The enrolled fields were included in the corn field aerial imagery collection and then tissue and soil (optional) samples were analyzed. Many of the participants submitted their yield information and a few followed the protocols of installing a full Replicated Strip Trial to test the application.

In addition, INFA continued a joint study with Indiana Pork focused on fields with hog manure. For all fields, no matter which study they were involved in, at the end of the year, INFA will supply each grower with the imagery and lab results of the group's fields. Any fields with a Replicated Strip Trial will also have an RST report. Each grower also receives a regional report, with each field assigned an anonymous ID number.

Our 2018 working group consisted of 20 GSS corn fields and 1 FSS soybean field. INFA costs are funded through Indiana Corn Marketing Council/Indiana Soybean Alliance (ICMC/ISA) checkoff funds and is offered free of charge to producers. The total value of the imagery and lab work to our producers in 2018 was \$ 3,978. Our program is possible due to the coordination and support of local Indiana Conservation Partnership staff. Our group also received additional support from state-wide coordination by ISDA and ICMC/ISA. This in-kind support is roughly valued at \$6,500.

For 2019, if you are interested in enrolling corn or soybean fields, please contact the Steuben County group leader or participating agency.

Crystal Van Pelt, Purdue Extension (Group Leader)
260-668-1000 ext. 1400

Tara Lee, Steuben County SWCD
260-665-3211 ext. 3

Martin Franke, LaGrange County SWCD
260-463-3166 ext. 3

2018 River Friendly Farmer



Pictured with Jerry Perkins (center) are Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch (left) and IN Farm Bureau President Randy Kron (right).
Photo courtesy of IASWCD

Our 2018 River Friendly Farmer was Jerry Perkins/KPS Farms Inc.

KPS is a family-owned farm located in southwestern Steuben County, in the Pigeon Creek Watershed. They farm over 2,100 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay.

The primary conservation practices KPS utilizes includes no-till, cover crops,

filter strips, and nutrient management. They began to add conservation practices into their operation beginning in the late 60's and early 70's. These conservation practices address erosion and soil health. Erosion is reduced by leaving more residue on the surface in the months when there are no crops growing. Cover crops contribute organic matter, curb soil erosion, promote soil health, conserve moisture and boost fertility. Most importantly, they take up excess nutrients that might leach out of the soil profile. Using cover crops can offset the high cost of fertilizer, reducing the amount necessary.

To recapture nutrients for improved soil health, KPS uses a combination of cover crops and manure. Manure is incorporated into the soil, the cover

crops recapture nutrients, keeping them from escaping into waterbodies. Filter strips help slow water runoff from fields, trapping and filtering sediment and nutrients for water quality protection. Protecting water quality is very important to KPS Farms – for both current and future generations.

Jerry has had a lifelong relationship with agriculture in western Steuben and eastern LaGrange counties. He grew up working on the dairy farm founded by his grandfather, Jada Perkins, in the late 1890's. Jerry served as an NRCS Soil Conservationist from 1987-1995 and became a specialist in rotational grazing, serving as an NRCS Grazing Land Specialist from 1996 to his retirement in 2011. In 2018, Jerry received the LaGrange County SWCD Long Time Service Award for his tireless efforts in promoting soil & water health.

BACKYARD CONSERVATION

By Deb Jimison, Elkhart County SWCD

Many of our native plant and animal species are experiencing population declines due to many reasons, including urbanization of wild places. Changes in water and temperature regimes, depleted soils and reduced air quality are some of the issues being faced after that change. This habitat loss and other environmental stresses are leading to the population numbers decreasing for many of our favorite and most needed beneficial plants, pollinators, birds and animals.

Private landowners make the management decisions for around 92 million acres in the United States, with various levels of knowledge and awareness. That's all of us average folks, planting our favorite roses, fertilizing, spraying Roundup and pesticides on anything we think we don't want in the yard. There's a lot of responsibility as a homeowner. We need to actively think about and learn there are consequences to our decisions and to reduce unintended negative impacts. There are many sources of good information out there to guide the way and address your specific interests.

You might think that your homestead doesn't have much impact on the big pictures, but it's possible for our decisions to reach past our boundary lines. Chemical sprays and applications don't necessarily stay on your land if manufacturer's directions aren't followed. If we all considered doing a few easy, relatively cheap changes, big improvements in our soil, air and water quality can happen!

One change that can be made is the type of landscaping you chose. Our ecosystem has evolved over thousands of years to create a symphony of trees, shrubs, plants, birds, mammals and insects co-existing. A new Smithsonian Institute study shows insect-eating birds need to have an area with at least 70% of native vegetation to support a steady population. The non-native vegetation doesn't have the same food or habitat values as do our native ones. You can simply remove the invasives and nonnatives and allow the area to recover, letting nature take its course.

The way you conduct your lawn care has an impact. A bluegrass or fescue lawn is not ideal for wildlife, but it is a carbon sink that keeps carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere as a greenhouse gas. The carbon is instead deposited into the soil as organic matter, which improves soil. Recycle grass clippings by leaving them on the lawn, a free fertilizer! Leave your mower set on the tallest setting, taller grass is strong grass that can fight off

weeds and requires less inputs like herbicides or fertilizers. The ideal situation would be to establish more native plantings. Less to mow is always good in my book.

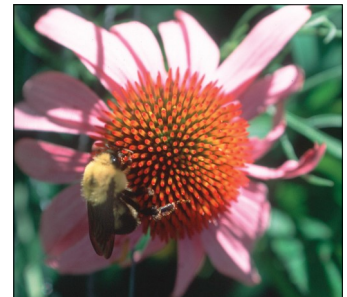
We see bigger storms and rain events with increasing frequency in the Midwest. These have the potential to threaten property, or even our lives. One easy thing to do is to install rain barrels or rain gardens on our property. This slows down the damage of a hard rain by slowing runoff and keeping it onsite for a short time, removing pollutants and keeping some of the storm water from entering streams and ditches so quickly. If you have room for a small pond, this is an excellent way to enrich your area as a wildlife habitat. Even a bird bath or saucer of water can help, especially in the winter.

As an immediate enhancement for wildlife habitat, as you're waiting for the native trees, flowers and shrubs to grow, store bought or homemade houses and feeders can be put in for all kinds of birds, insects and mammals. Leaving "wild" areas that aren't mowed are also excellent improvements for your yard. Take the lazy gardener approach by not fall raking or removing dead limbs or trees (where it is safe) as these areas can harbor multitudes of species. That will give you more time to spend in the hammock to watch all the critters that have found your oasis.

All living things have the same basic requirements to live and raise their families, to have food, water and shelter. Together, with some awareness and appreciation for the lesser beings in our midst, we can improve their outcomes and slow the decline of biodiversity with just a few simple changes. As wildlife's future is decided by us, we are also deciding the kind of future humans will have.

Many people tend to think of animals as large, furry, likeable creatures.

In reality, insects are the dominant form of animal life.

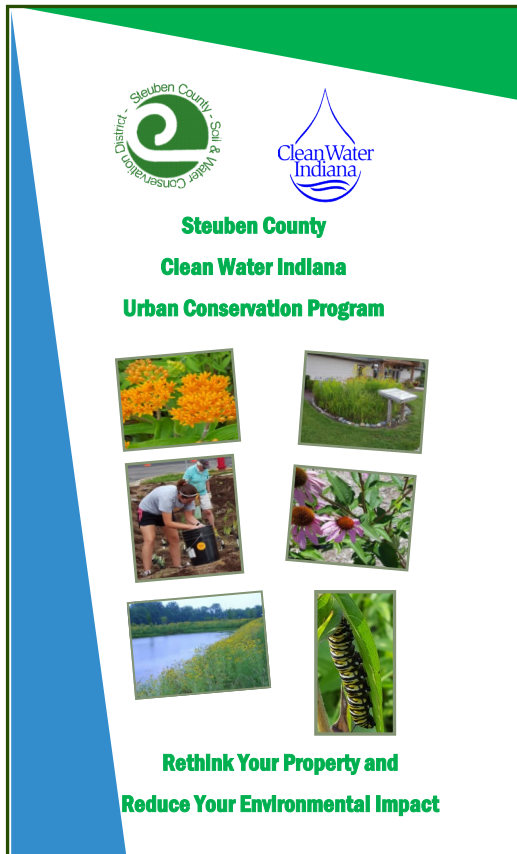


Steuben County SWCD Urban Conservation Program

Why Practice Urban Conservation? The everyday decisions we make at home greatly affect our environment. Increased urbanization means more impervious surfaces and runoff and less wildlife habitat. Our water, soil, air, and wildlife depend on us for their protection and adopting conservation practices is one important way in which we can preserve the environment for future generations. In this fast-paced world, we recognize that connecting back to nature is an excellent way to relieve stress and anxiety. By preserving the natural resources around our home, we can spend less time maintaining our yards and more time enjoying them.

What Benefits Does Urban Conservation Provide?

- ☛ *Attracts wildlife, providing food and cover*
- ☛ *Provides integrated pest management*
- ☛ *Increases property values*
- ☛ *Provides substantial monetary and time savings compared to traditional lawn maintenance*
- ☛ *Protects watersheds by providing filtration and reducing pollution from runoff*
- ☛ *Connects communities with nature*



The flyer features the Steuben County District SWCD logo and the Clean Water Indiana logo at the top. Below the logos, the text reads "Steuben County Clean Water Indiana Urban Conservation Program". The center of the flyer contains six small images: a field of yellow wildflowers, a garden path with a white bench, a person working in a garden, a close-up of purple flowers, a body of water with reeds, and a caterpillar on a leaf. At the bottom, the text says "Rethink Your Property and Reduce Your Environmental Impact".

Am I Eligible?

To qualify for cost-share you must meet the following requirements:

- Land where the practice is to be installed must be located within an urban residential area in Steuben County.
- The property where the practice is to be installed must be located on or within 1/2-mile of a river, lake shore, or perennial stream; participants adjacent to a waterbody will be given priority.
- The cooperator will agree to follow NRCS standards and specifications for the practice and/or contract specifications.
- If you do not own the land, you **MUST** get the landowner permission and signature.
- The date of purchase/installation must be **AFTER** the date of cost-share application approval.
- Cost-share program participants must display a stewardship yard sign for the life of the practice.
- Funds will not be used for landscaping, water features, or aesthetic enhancements.

The Urban Conservation Mission

Connecting urban landowners with educational, technical, and financial assistance to implement conservation practices that will protect soil, water, air, and wildlife while providing beauty and enjoyment for the homeowner and community.

“The neat thing about insects is, anybody can help them. If you have a little yard or if you’re a farmer, you can work to manage plants for pollinators. We can do this across the landscape and we need to”

-Scott Black
Xerces Society Executive Director

The Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB)



The Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB) is one of our nation's most significant collections of inland rivers and streams. The WLEB covers nearly 7 million acres and it encompasses most of northwest Ohio, as well as portions of northeast Indiana, and southeast Michigan. Specific to Indiana, it covers parts of Steuben, DeKalb, Allen, Noble, Adams and Wells Counties. Around 75 percent of the land is in agricultural production. Approximately 1.2 million people live in the Basin, distributed between three urban centers, Toledo, Ohio; Fort Wayne, IN; Lima, Ohio and numerous cities and towns.

During the 1970s and 1980s, water quality in the Basin was impaired by algal blooms. At that time, particulate phosphorus that attached to soil particles was considered the culprit for the impaired conditions. With assistance from the Natural Resource Conservation Service, State Departments of Agriculture and Soil and Water Conservation Districts, as well as many other agencies, farmers began to implement no-till and conservation tillage into their farms and the phosphorus loads were greatly reduced.

Unfortunately, since the mid-1990s algal blooms have been on the rise. According to recent studies, it appears that Dissolved Reactive Phosphorus (DRP) (soluble phosphorus) is considered to be the main problem. This form is a ready food source for algae and plays a factor to the rapid growth resulting in algae blooms.

Phosphorus is one of the three major components in most fertilizers, followed by nitrogen and potassium. On a bag of fertilizer, the concentration of each is expressed as the N:P:K ratio. These three numbers show the relative amount of nitrogen to phosphorus to potassium in the bag (for example, 29-3-5). Within freshwater, the single essential nutrient that is in the shortest supply is phosphorus. Therefore, reducing phosphorus inputs can limit algal blooms.

Phosphorus comes from agricultural fertilizer and manure runoff, when heavy rains wash soil and fertilizer into rivers and streams. Phosphorus also comes from sewage treatment plants, combined sewer overflows, water treatment plants, cleaning products, faulty septic tanks and residential lawn fertilizers. The largest phosphorus loads typically occur during heavy rain storms when fertilizer and other phosphorus sources are quickly washed into rivers and streams.

Algal blooms and harmful algal blooms (HABs) are the result of a combination of inputs - from urban and agricultural areas, weather patterns and other factors. It is a complex problem, and there is no silver-bullet solution, no matter how badly everyone would like there to be. However, there are many conservation practices that will help, in small ways, and when those practices are added together we can reduce the amount of nutrient runoff.

Indiana conservation agencies, landowners, and other stakeholders continue to work together to help improve the water quality of our streams and inland rivers, and ultimately Lake Erie. The Indiana State Department of Agriculture, NRCS, Soil and Water Conservation Districts and others are partnering on several projects which will result in a significant measurable load reduction in total phosphorus in the St. Joseph, St. Mary's, Upper Maumee and the Auglaize watersheds through the leadership of training, education, promotion, development and installation of voluntary water quality programs and best management practice installation, nutrient management plan development, soil testing and training, water quality grant development & implementation, guidance & assistance for best management practice implementation through federal, state & local agencies and non-governmental organizations, coordination of the 4Rs of Nutrient Stewardship Program with agricultural industry, landowners & producers, implementation of Great Lake Restoration Initiatives & Clean Water Indiana projects.

To learn more about Indiana's commitment to enhance water quality in the WLEB and other phosphorus reduction efforts, visit:
Indiana State Department of Agriculture: <https://www.in.gov/isda/3261.htm>

Indiana's Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWA) Domestic Action Plan (DAP) for the WLEB:
<https://www.in.gov/isda/3432.htm>

Blue Accounting's Erie Stat, a website with a wealth of resource information and an online tool that tracks total and dissolved phosphorus entering Lake Erie's western and central basins from selected tributaries (rivers):

<https://www.blueaccounting.org/issue/eriestat>

Look for the 2019 Spring
Garden Series coming Tuesday
evenings this May.

For more information contact:

Purdue Extension
(260) 668-1000 ext. 1400

or

Steuben County SWCD
(260) 665-3211 ext. 3



**Upcoming
Events:**

SAVE THE DATE AG SAFETY DAY



Contact:
Carpers Farm Supply,
Steuben County Purdue Extension

or

Steuben County SWCD
for more information

July 27, 2019 9:00am to 2:00pm

309 N Grand Ave, Ashley, IN 46705

More details TBA

Upcoming
Events:

2019 STEWARDSHIP WEEK

April 28 - May 5, 2019



The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Stewardship and Education Committee announced the 2019 Stewardship Week theme: **"Life in the Soil: Dig Deeper."**

Each year, the Steuben County SWCD works to promote and share information about stewardship and conservation. We hold field days, educational programming and workshops to educate youth and adults about the importance of caring for our natural resources.

To remind us of the power each person has to conserve natural resources and improve our community, we celebrate Stewardship Week, one of the world's largest conservation-related observances. Each year, the NACD Stewardship and Education Committee develops a different theme. This year's topic is soil.

Soil is a living and life-giving substance, without which we would perish. As world population and food

production demands rise, keeping our soil healthy and productive is of paramount importance. So much so that we believe improving the health of our soil is one of the most important endeavors of our time.

By focusing more attention on soil health and education about the positive impact healthy soils can have on productivity and conservation, we can help farmer's feed the world more profitably and sustainably, now and for generations to come.

Managing for soil health (improved soil function) is mostly a matter of maintaining suitable habitat for the myriad of creatures that comprise the soil food web.

Managing for soil health can be accomplished by disturbing the soil as little as possible, growing as many different species of plants as practical, keeping living plants in the soil as often as possible, and keeping the soil covered all the time.



CORE 4

The basics of Soil Health systems include these four basic principles: **Minimize Soil Disturbance**, **Maximize Soil Cover**, **Maximize Biodiversity**, and **Provide Continuous Living Roots**.

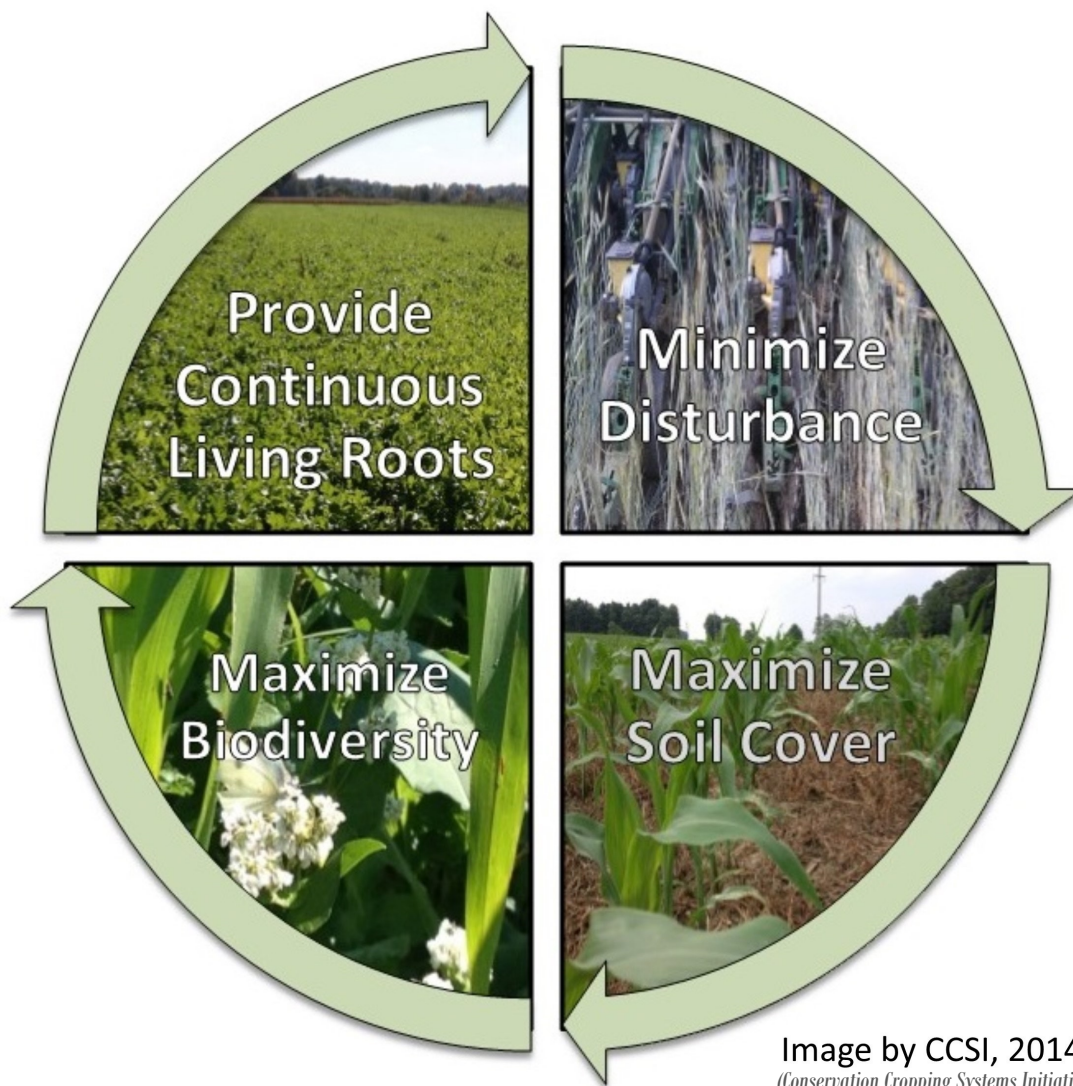


Image by CCSI, 2014
(Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative)
<http://ccsin.iaswcd.org/>



Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District

Peachtree Plaza 200
1220 N 200 W STE L
Angola, IN 46703
260-665-3211x3

**Conserving the Natural Resources of Steuben
County for Future Generations!**

All programs and activities of the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District and its Partnership Agencies are offered on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

2019 Affiliate Membership Form

Yes, I am interested in being an Affiliate Member of the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District for calendar year 2019! It is my understanding that the donations received from Affiliate Memberships are used to supplement the District's Information and Education programs for youth and adults, and that the District will publish a list of Affiliate Members in its annual report and newsletters throughout the year (circulation - over 1,600 people).

Personal or Business Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Membership Levels

_____ \$25.00 - Bronze Level

_____ \$50.00 - Silver Level

_____ \$75.00 - Gold Level

_____ \$100.00 and above - Platinum Level

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return this form with your donation made payable to: *Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District*
A receipt will be forwarded to you to acknowledge your donation
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Steuben County SWCD • 1220 North 200 West STE L - Peachtree Plaza 200 • Angola, IN 46703