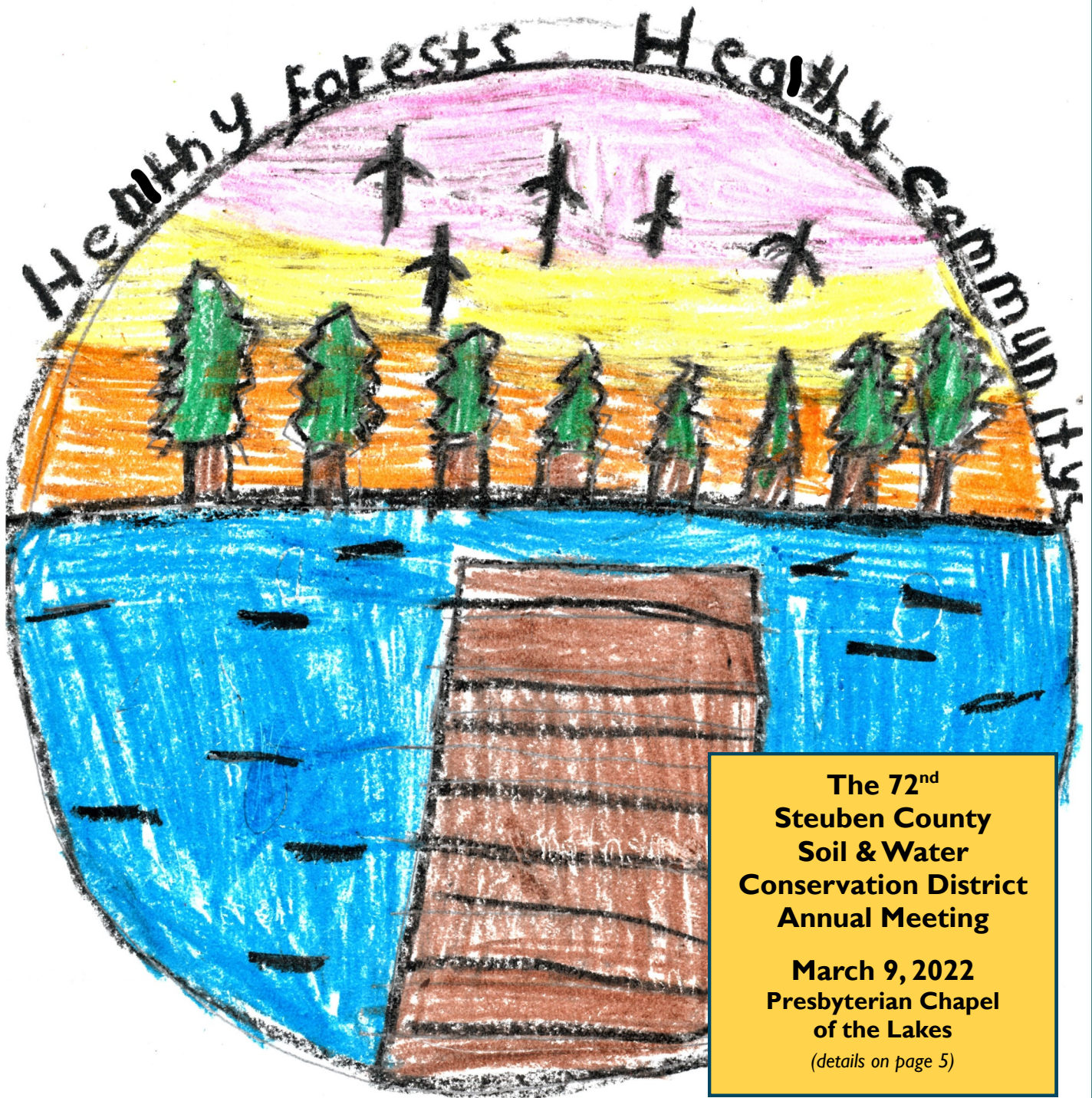




Volume 45 Issue 1  
Winter 2022

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



**The 72<sup>nd</sup>  
Steuben County  
Soil & Water  
Conservation District  
Annual Meeting**

**March 9, 2022  
Presbyterian Chapel  
of the Lakes**

*(details on page 5)*



## MISSION

It is the mission of the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to provide leadership and assistance in the proper use and management of soil, water, and related natural resources in Steuben County.

## HISTORY

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.

The Steuben County SWCD was organized by Steuben County landowners in 1948. It 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.

### **Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)\***

Staff

Janel S. Meyer, Administrative Coordinator  
Aimee M. Wentworth, Resource Conservationist

### **Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)\***

Staff

Arthur Franke, District Conservationist

### **Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) Division of Soil Conservation\***

Staff

Kate Sanders, Resource Specialist  
Sandra Hoffarth, District Support Specialist

## CORE VALUES

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

### **2021 Board of Supervisors**

Kayleen Hart, Chair  
Chuck Howard, Vice Chair  
Craig Holman  
David Perkins  
Beth Williams

### **2021 Associate Supervisors**

Tim Groosbeck  
Bridget Harrison  
Daniel Oberst

If you have an interest in assisting us with accomplishing our mission, consider joining our team as an Associate Supervisor. Contact the office at (260) 665-3211 ext. 3 for additional details.

*\*The Steuben County SWCD, NRCS and ISDA Division of Soil Conservation are three of the eight agencies which comprise the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP), who all share a common goal of promoting conservation. Arthur Franke is the District Conservationist assigned to Steuben County. Kate Sanders is the Resource Specialist assigned to Steuben & DeKalb Counties. Sandra Hoffarth is the District Support Specialist for 18 Northern Indiana counties.*

## FRONT COVER

Artwork by Za'Lynn Fuller, first place winner for the 2021 Steuben County Poster Contest in the 2<sup>nd</sup>- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade category.

The contest is held in conjunction with Soil & Water Stewardship Week, celebrated between the last Sunday in April and the first Sunday in May. Stewardship Week has been observed annually since 1955 to remind us of our responsibility to care for natural resources.

## INSIDE FRONT COVER

Aerial photo of Steuben County, Indiana.

*Photo courtesy of Steuben County SWCD*

## THIS PAGE

Orland, Indiana cornfield.

*Photo courtesy of Janel Meyer*

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## BOARD CHAIR REPORT

*"In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught."*

**- Babe Dioum**

At the Steuben County SWCD, we are passionate about conservation, and we want to impart this knowledge to others with the hope that they become passionate about conservation, too. Our staff is always available to contact with all your conservation questions, and the SWCD has several resources available for learning about this important topic. Although in-person group presentations are available by contacting the SWCD, the pandemic has made it necessary to develop other ways of learning about conservation. We are excited to have developed several new options over the past couple years.

To explore these new options, begin your search at the SWCD's website: [www.steubenswcd.org](http://www.steubenswcd.org), where you can learn about our history, grants, cost-share programs, recent news, upcoming events, and most importantly: educational resources. Under the tab, Conservation Resources, you will see "Educational Programs" in the drop-down menu. We are hoping that local schools and groups take advantage of these new opportunities, as well as anyone interested in learning more. You can also contact one of our staff members to present to your group. Below is a summary of these educational resources:

- **Augmented Reality Sandbox (ARS) Unit:** This tool combines 3D visualization applications with a hands-on sandbox exhibit to teach earth science concepts. The ARS unit allows users to create topographic models by shaping real sand, which is then augmented in real time by an elevation color map, topographic contour lines, and simulated water. The system teaches geographic, geologic, and hydrologic concepts such as how to read a topography map, the

*(continued on page 4)*



## BOARD CHAIR REPORT *(continued from page 3)*

meaning of contour lines, etc. Lesson plans are also available for use to supplement the educational experience.

- **Conservation Education Video Series:** Presented by Purdue Extension--Steuben County, the Steuben County SWCD, and the Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy, this video series is designed to educate youth about natural resources, environmental science, and conservation. Although the resources are available to the public, they are designed with the public school system in mind as our agencies have provided local field trip support in the past. COVID-19 has prevented such field trips, so we present to you some of our lessons in video format! Videos such as "Earth as an Apple", and "Aquatic Macroinvertebrates" are available.
- If you are interested in geocaching, take advantage of our recent project. In a partnership with Steuben County 4-H, a geocache was placed in each of the 12 townships of Steuben County. In addition to the paper geocache log, the SWCD and 4-H have added another educational aspect to the journey. Inside each geocache are the details about the soil on which one stands when they find each cache. Then, using a GeoTrail Passport, the geocache hunter can make a rubbing of the soil symbols that are on the side of the cache in each township. Once a geocache hunter has completed the GeoTrail and collected all twelve rubbings, they can take their completed passport to the Steuben County Purdue Extension Office to claim a small prize.
- Our final additions to these innovative resources are the Educational Lesson Kits. These kits are designed to be either checked out by teachers for use in their classrooms or to be used in a presentation by SWCD staff. Each kit contains most, or all the supplies needed to share the lesson along with at least one demonstration of the principles discussed. Each lesson is designed to be between 30 – 45 minutes, not including clean up time for some lessons. Available Lesson Kits include:

- Erosion
- Food Chains and Food Webs
- Pollinators
- Soil
- Stormwater
- Trees
- The Water Cycle
- Wetlands
- Worms



Pollinator Lesson Kit

*Photo courtesy of Steuben County SWCD*



Soil Lesson Kit

*Photo courtesy of Steuben County SWCD*

Please consider using some of these valuable materials to enhance your knowledge or organizations you are involved with. Consider other ways to improve and conserve your soil and water, such as utilizing a rain barrel, installing a rain garden, planting a cover crop on your vegetable garden or after the primary crop if you own larger acreage. Any sediment that is transported to storm drains and surface waters can choke aquatic life and increase water temperatures. Various pollutants such as bacteria, nutrients and heavy metals may also be attached to these sediments, further degrading water quality. Look into ways that you can improve the watershed you live in. Everyone can do something to improve their environment. Remember – it takes everyone to make a healthy watershed!

*"And I dream of the vast deserts, the forests,  
and all the wilderness of our continent, wild  
places that we should protect as a precious  
heritage for our children and for our children's  
children. We must never forget that it is  
our duty to protect this environment."*

- Nelson Mandela

Kayleen Hart, Chair  
Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District



## ANNUAL MEETING

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

**MARCH 9, 2022**

### **72<sup>ND</sup> Annual Meeting**

The evening will include a brief report on 2021 District activities and the election of a Board Supervisor. David Perkins will be running unopposed; nominations will also be accepted from the floor\*.

• **David Perkins** •

Incumbent David Perkins is a lifelong resident of Steuben and LaGrange counties, first elected to the Board in 2019. David grew up farming with his dad and uncle on the family farm near Stroh. He continues farming today with the addition of his son and grandson. David has a passion for missions and has been to the Philippines several times. His work there includes establishing running water in schools and supporting a farm/orphanage.

An R.S.V.P. is requested for dinner by March 1, 2022 to help with meal planning. Please consider joining us!

*\*To hold the position of elected supervisor an individual (1) must be an occupier of a tract of land that is located within the district; (2) must maintain the individual's permanent residence within the district; and (3) must be qualified by training and experience to perform the supervisor duties as required by Indiana Code.*



**SOIL & WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

# 2022 ANNUAL MEETING

PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL OF THE LAKES  
2955 WEST ORLAND ROAD, ANGOLA

**Join us for a free dinner and  
presentation by  
special guest Greg Shoup,  
WANE-TV Meteorologist**

**MARCH 9, 2022**  
5:45 P.M. DOORS OPEN  
6:00 P.M. DINNER  
6:30 P.M. MEETING

Please R.S.V.P for dinner by  
March 1, 2022  
Call: (260) 665-3211 ext. 3  
Email: [steubenswcd@gmail.com](mailto:steubenswcd@gmail.com)





**ABOVE**

2021 Steuben County SWCD Annual Meeting.  
Photo courtesy of Steuben County SWCD

Due to COVID-19, the 2021 Steuben County SWCD annual meeting was held virtually, via Zoom, on March 10, 2021.

Staff and Board Supervisors were able to conduct the meeting using a PowerPoint Presentation along with technical assistance from Resource Specialist Kate Sanders (ISDA), Purdue Extension's Tami Mosier (Extension Educator) and Linda Bidlack (Administrative Assistant), and Amy Work, Communications & Member Programs Manager with the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD). The election was held using the poll feature on Zoom. Craig Holman was re-elected to the Board of Supervisors for an additional 3-year term.

We thank everyone that joined us for the evening, especially Kate, Tami, Linda, and Amy for helping us navigate our first virtual Annual Meeting.

## 2021 STEUBEN COUNTY SWCD HIGHLIGHTS

### Agriculture Conservation Practices

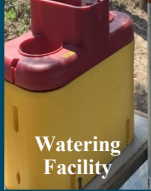
Listed below are the acres, feet, and/or number of conservation practices installed during the 2021 fiscal year and why they are important for conservation (practices include SWCD and NRCS projects).

*Except where indicated, all photos courtesy of Steuben County SWCD*

#### CROP PRODUCTION / SOIL HEALTH

##### 448.5 Acres of Cover Crops

- Reduce wind and water erosion.
- Maintain/improve soil health and organic matter.
- Reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excessive soil nutrients.
- Improve soil moisture use efficiency.
- Minimize soil compaction.
- Supply nutrients.
- Break pest cycles.
- Suppress excessive weed pressure.
- Provide food and escape cover for wildlife.



##### 138.5 Acres of Forage-Biomass Plantings

- Reduce wind and water erosion.
- Maintain/improve soil health & organic matter.
- Reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excessive soil nutrients.
- Improve soil moisture use efficiency.
- Minimize soil compaction.
- Supply nutrients.
- Break pest cycles.
- Improve or maintain livestock nutrition and/or health.
- Provide food and escape cover for wildlife.

##### 391.6 Acres of Comprehensive Nutrient Management (CNMP)

- Minimize agricultural nonpoint source pollution of surface & groundwater resources.
- Maintain/improve the physical, chemical, and biological soil condition.

#### FORESTRY

##### 430.1 Acres of Brush Management

- Restore or release desired vegetative cover to protect soils, control erosion, reduce sediment, improve water quality, or enhance hydrology.
- Maintain, modify, or enhance fish and wildlife habitat.
- Improve forage accessibility, quality, and quantity for wildlife.
- Control pervasive plant species to a desired level of treatment that will ultimately contribute to the creation or maintenance of a natural area.
- Create the desired plant community consistent with the ecological site.

##### 62.5 Acres Tree/Shrub Establishment

- Long-term erosion control and improvement of water quality.
- Improve or restore natural diversity and provide wildlife habitat.
- Forest products such as timber, pulpwood, etc.

##### 1.7 Acres Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment

- Reduce soil erosion from wind.
- Provide shelter for structures, animals, and people.
- Enhance wildlife habitat.

##### 2 Forest Management Plans (131.4 acres)

- Provide detailed information about species composition, potential harmful pests and other ecosystem components of the property and surrounding landscape; a "road map" to assist landowners with achieving their conservation goals in a cost-effective & strategic way.
- Protect and enhance wildlife habitat.

#### PASTURE PRACTICES

##### 8,198 Feet of Fencing

- Improve erosion control & water quality.
- Regulate livestock access to areas.
- Permit proper grazing distribution.

##### 2,680 Ft.<sup>2</sup> Heavy Use Area Protection

- Protect & improve water quality.
- Provide a stable, non-eroding surface for areas frequently used by animals.

##### Watering Facility

- Improve animal distribution.
- Provide a water source that is an alternative to a sensitive resource.



#### WILDLIFE HABITAT

##### 31.4 Acres of Conservation Cover (Pollinator/Wildlife Habitat)

- Reduce sheet, rill, and wind erosion and sedimentation.
- Reduce ground and surface water quality degradation by nutrients and surface water quality degradation by sediment.
- Improve soil health.
- Enhance or develop wildlife, pollinator and beneficial organism habitat.



Pollinator/Wildlife Habitat (dormant seeding)  
Photo courtesy of Tom Buchs







## 2021 STEUBEN COUNTY SWCD HIGHLIGHTS

### Urban Conservation Practices

Below is a summary of conservation practices installed during the 2021 fiscal year and why they are important for conservation.

**URBAN PRACTICES**



**ABOVE**  
Urban practices/plantings installed in 2021. Projects funded through a Steuben County SWCD Clean Water Indiana Grant.  
*Photo's courtesy of Steuben County SWCD*

4 Native-Scaping/Pollinator Plantings (totaling 11,055 ft<sup>2</sup>)  
2 Tree/Shrub Plantings (totaling 1,500 ft<sup>2</sup>)  
1 Water-Edge Enhancement/Filter Strip (14,810 ft<sup>2</sup>)

- Reduce suspended solids and associated contaminants in runoff and excessive sediment in surface waters.
- Reduce dissolved contaminant loadings in runoff.
- Attract native animals such as butterflies and birds by providing food sources and valuable habitat.
- Enhance the beauty of yards and neighborhoods.
- Help fight invasive plants.
- Reduce the need for pesticides.
- Reduce energy consumption and pollution (limited need to mow).
- Improve and protect biodiversity.

### Steuben County SWCD Clean Water Indiana Urban Conservation Grant - Project Update

by Kris Thomas, City of Angola MS4 Coordinator

In 2019, the City of Angola/Trine University MS4 program was awarded funding through the Steuben County SWCD's Clean Water Indiana competitive grant. Because this grant focused on urban conservation, the funding provided the City of Angola the unique opportunity to enhance water quality in the Fawn River watershed through the reduction of sediment and nutrients.

The project incorporated the installation of a water-edge enhancement, specifically a filter strip, at one city property that has a drainage ditch running along one of its downslope borders. The location of the ditch makes it susceptible to sediment and nutrients that may run off from the upslope lot due to overland flow caused by rain events and snow melt. The filter strip incorporated native plant varieties that do well in moderate to high water-flow areas and was installed adjacent to the ditch to help filter any sediment and/or nutrients prior to the runoff entering the waterbody. It is anticipated this natural native feature will have a significant impact in the reduction of pollutants that may result from runoff.

Although the project seemed relatively fundamental in nature, the planning and implementation took many hours and much effort from city staff, SWCD employees, and NRCS and ISDA representatives. All devoted to ensuring the success of the project. The site conditions of the project location proved difficult. Not only was the area covered in

(continued on page 8)

## 2021 STEUBEN COUNTY SWCD HIGHLIGHTS

*Steuben County SWCD Clean Water Indiana Urban Conservation Grant - Project Update  
(continued from page 7)*

invasive plant species, a high-water table and an area of concentrated flow leading to the drainage ditch were also present. Several applications of suitable herbicide were necessary to clear the area of invasive plant species before planting could even begin. Consideration of the site conditions played a major role in deciding the best way to plant the proposed filter strip. Planting would entail more than just sowing native plant seeds. In the end, erosion control blankets and more than five hundred plugs of water-tolerant plants were installed. All 500+ plugs were hand-planted by city employees, SWCD employees, and local ISDA and NRCS representatives in areas that were prone to saturation and the concentrated flow area.

This project, which began in 2019, is not over yet. Blue Heron Ministries signed on to conduct maintenance of the area to ensure the more than five hundred plant plugs and native grasses that have sprouted are not overtaken by invasive vegetation. Soon, we hope to see mature stands of prairie grasses and sedges working as expected to filter stormwater runoff entering the drainage system.

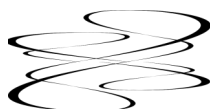
The City of Angola is extremely thankful to the Steuben County SWCD for the opportunity provided through this grant. We are even more appreciative of the individuals who helped, and who continue to help, make this project a success. We all benefit from these individual's dedication to conservation. The city continues to work to ensure municipal operations do not contribute to water pollution through stormwater runoff.



### ABOVE

The City of Angola/Trine University MS4 filter-strip project occurred in several phases, which included site preparation to control invasive species, temporary vegetation stabilization, seeding a warm season grass mix, and planting approximately 500 native grass plant plugs. Project management will require several years of invasive species control while the warm season grasses and plugs continue to establish.

*Photo's courtesy of Kris Thomas, City of Angola/Trine University MS4 Coordinator  
and the Steuben County SWCD*





## EDUCATION

The SWCD continues our commitment to inform residents and communities about our natural resources and how to conserve them. We are strong believers in education to help people of all ages understand and appreciate Steuben County's resources.

We work with a variety of conservation partners, landowners, businesses, agencies, and organizations on several of our education programs. We would like to thank everyone for their assistance and support with this critical endeavor. We also recognize the many Affiliate Members - individuals, groups and organizations who choose to financially support our work. Donations received from Affiliate Memberships are used to help support our adult and youth information and education programs. Please see page 14 for a list of our 2021 Affiliate Members.

### 2021 Youth Programs

- ◇ Angola Middle School Water Quality Field Day
- ◇ Conservation Camps in LaGrange, Steuben & Whitley Counties
- ◇ FFA Environmental/Natural Resources Judging
- ◇ Prairie Heights Farm Field Trip
- ◇ Soil and Water Stewardship Week  
*Stewardship Week Materials*  
*Stewardship Week Poster Contest*
- ◇ Tri-State Regional Science Fair
- ◇ Youth Conservation Field Day  
*Educational Booklets/Materials*  
*Youth Conservation Field Day at Ryan Park Elementary School*

### 2021 Adult Programs

- ◇ Agronomy Field Day
- ◇ Contractor Workshop
- ◇ Forestry Field Day
- ◇ Spring Garden Series
- ◇ Steuben County 4-H Fair
- ◇ Steuben County SWCD 71st Annual Meeting
- ◇ Steuben County Life Program

**Other Activities:** Annual Tree Program • Wildlife Food Plot Seed • Tillage Transect Surveys (spring and fall) • Hoosier Riverwatch Water Monitoring Kits

A special thank you to:

- The **Steuben County Lakes Council** for sponsoring educational activity booklets for local 1st - 5th grade students within the county for our Stewardship Week and 4<sup>th</sup>-Grade Youth Field Day Education program, and **Bill Schmidt and Karen DeForest** for assistance with the Steuben County Life Program.
- **City of Angola/Trine University MS4** for sponsoring educational storm water activity booklets as part of our 4<sup>th</sup>-Grade Youth Field Day Education program.
- The Steuben County Community Foundation's **Ralph E. Taylor Grant** for providing a 2020 grant to support the 4<sup>th</sup>-Grade Youth Field Day Education program. Since the program was canceled in 2020 and 2021, this grant will be used in 2022.

**Carnegie Public Library of Steuben County, Potawatomi Inn-Pokagon State Park, Rolling Acres Farm, Steuben County Council on Aging, Inc., Steuben County Government, Steuben Lakes Regional Waste District, The Andersons, Inc., and Trine University** for providing workshop facilities.

**Nicky Ball, Linda Bidlack, Terry Coleman, Carly Cornhill, Tom Crowe, Sonya Dintaman, Colleen Everage, Gary Fair, Sheri Frank, Arthur Franke, Martin Franke, Drew Gamble, Cheryl and Brad Hamlin, Karen Holman, Tracy Hughes, Heath Hurst, Mark Kays, Julie Knudson, Jayna Kozlowski, Jennifer LaRose, Jan McGowen, Matt Meersman, Joe Moore, Tami Mosier, Roy Nevil, Nellie Peffley, Kate Sanders, Jim Somers, Kris Thomas, Shannon Thomas, Jennifer Thum, Bill Ward, Beth Williams, Anna Willis, Amy Work, and Tyler Weldon** for presenting at and/or assisting with Steuben County SWCD's 2021 youth and adult education programs.

## EDUCATION

### Meet the Steuben County SWCD Resource Conservationist

by Aimee M. Wentworth

Hello! For those of you who I've not had a chance to meet, I am the Resource Conservationist at the Steuben County SWCD. I transplanted to Steuben County a few years ago and have been with the District for a year. I have an undergraduate degree in Environmental Science from Salem International University and a graduate degree in Leadership from Trine University. I am also a certified Indiana Master Naturalist and volunteer at the Pokagon State Park Nature Center. Caring for the environment is something that I am very passionate about, and my family and I love to spend time hiking and experiencing the natural wonders our state has to offer.

Since joining the District, I have been busy creating and enhancing educational opportunities for our residents. Educational kits are now available to be used in group presentations. We also collaborated with the Steuben County Purdue Extension office to set up the exciting Steuben County Soil Science GeoTrail (see Board Chair Kayleen Hart's article in this issue or visit our website for more information: [www.steubenswcd.org](http://www.steubenswcd.org)). Working on the GeoTrail project and on projects with other conservation

partners has allowed me to build relationships in the community. Relationships that are vital to assist the SWCD's efforts to conserve and protect our natural resources. In addition, work continues on our conservation video series, with a new video due out soon. The topics I am working on are invasive species, pollinators, and stormwater, plus a Steuben County SWCD video explaining who the SWCD is and what it does.

As a student of this year's Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy, I am continuing to learn about Steuben County's watersheds and gaining information about the many tools available to use for the conservation of soil and water resources. I also take advantage of other educational opportunities to further my knowledge of how best to share the conservation message. I look forward to meeting and working with you and enhancing my knowledge to best serve Steuben County residents.

*"The Earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with faithful stewardship. We cannot say we love the land and then take steps to destroy it for use by future generations."*

- John Paul II

### 2021 Tri-State Regional Science Fair Soil and Water Conservation Award Winners



Since 2010, the NE Indiana Conservation Districts of DeKalb, LaGrange, and Steuben counties have sponsored special Conservation Awards at the Tri-State Regional Science Fair. Students are recognized for their outstanding science fair projects that recognize the importance of conservation and stewardship of natural resources such as soil, air, water and energy. Awards consist of a certificate of recognition, a monetary award (\$75 1<sup>st</sup>-Place; \$50 2<sup>nd</sup>-Place; \$25 3<sup>rd</sup>-Place), and a conservation book. We recognize and congratulate our 2021 Tri-State Regional Science Fair Soil and Water Conservation Award winners.

○ **First Place**

**Ava Budak** (9<sup>th</sup> Grade) and **Isabella Budak** (10<sup>th</sup> Grade), Angola High School, for their project, "The Impact of Using Urine as Fertilizer from an Ecological and Environmental Standpoint".

○ **Second Place**

**Piper McGregor** (5<sup>th</sup> Grade), Ryan Park Elementary School, for her project, "Soggy Soil Science - Is Your Water Safe?".

○ **Third Place**

**Titus Refner** (7<sup>th</sup> Grade), DeKalb High School, for his project, "Best of the Big Three".

Providing conservation awards has given the DeKalb, LaGrange, and Steuben County SWCD's the opportunity to reward local students for work in natural resources conservation and it has also allowed the districts to present a conservation message to the larger group, both young people and their parents, that assemble every year for the awards ceremony.



## 2021 STEWARDSHIP WEEK POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

### “Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities”

In 1955, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) began a national program to encourage Americans to focus on stewardship. This national program is known as Stewardship Week; officially celebrated from the last Sunday in April to the first Sunday in May. It is one of the world's largest conservation-related observances.

NACD recognizes education as a critical element of the conservation effort at local, state and national levels. The Steuben County SWCD also recognizes the importance of providing education about the significance of our connection to natural resources in our daily lives. Each year, a theme is developed for Stewardship Week. The 2021 theme was “Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities” to demonstrate how trees and forests are critical to providing clean air and water, healthy soil, shade, abundant wildlife habitat, jobs and valuable products we use every day.

To celebrate Stewardship Week, the Steuben County SWCD provided educational activity booklets to the MSD of Steuben County and Fremont Elementary Schools. A poster contest was also sponsored for 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. The contest gives students the chance to have their art displayed as part of the SWCD's local conservation outreach initiative. Each student that submitted a poster received a small participation gift bag. Winners received an award certificate, colored pencils, a Backyard Birds and Blossoms coloring book, and a Walmart gift card. We recognize our 2021 “Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities” poster contest winners below and on the cover of this annual report.



#### ABOVE

Left to right:

1<sup>st</sup> Grade, 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Jane Singleton; Fremont Elementary (Mrs. Stukey)

2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Telissa Bater; Pleasant Lake (Ms. Clary)

2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Piper Fox; Ryan Park Elementary (Mrs. Clary)

Photo's courtesy of  
Steuben County SWCD



#### LEFT

4<sup>th</sup> Grade, 1<sup>st</sup> Place:

Amaya Prater, Ryan Park  
Elementary (Mrs. Robertson)

Photo courtesy of  
Steuben County SWCD

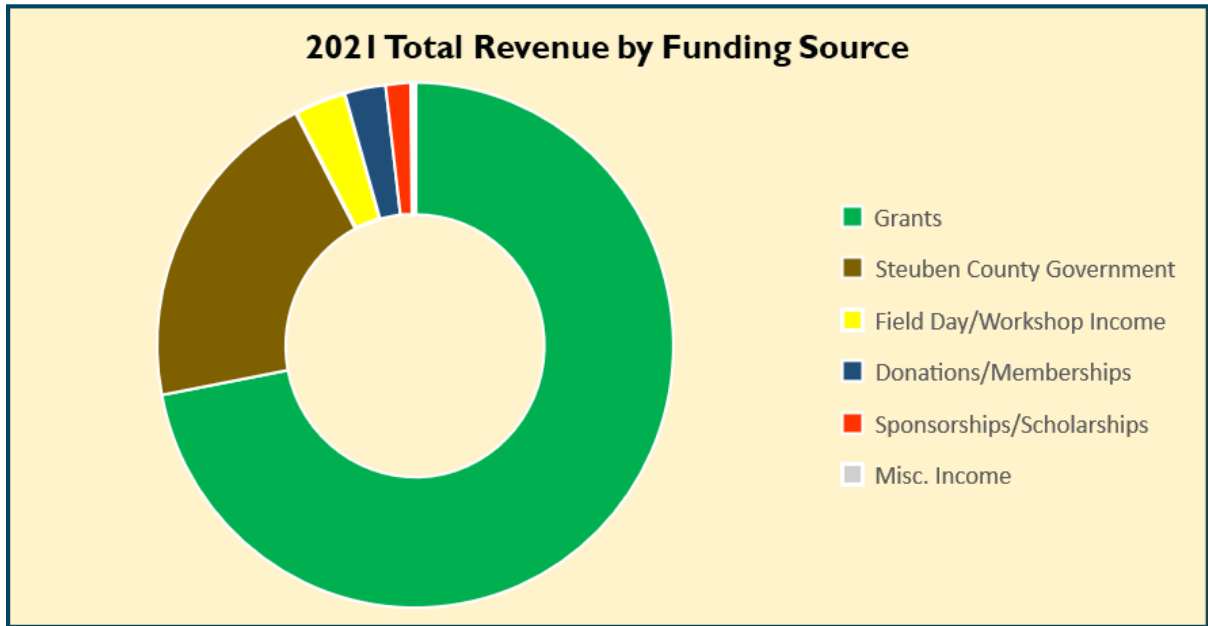
## 2021 FINANCIAL REPORT

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| <b>Receipts</b>  |                     |
| State—Clean Water Indiana (CWI) Matching Grant for District Operation  | \$10,000.00         |
| County for District Operation*   | \$16,000.00         |
| Federal Funds—Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Grant for Pigeon Creek   | \$17,511.50         |
| State Funds—Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) Watershed Land Treatment Grant   | \$16,514.00         |
| State Funds—Steuben County SWCD Clean Water Indiana (CWI) Urban Grant  | \$12,469.44         |
| Workshop/Field Day Income—Steuben County Life, Conservation Camp, ARS Unit Rental  | \$2,510.00          |
| Donations & Memberships  | \$2,033.00          |
| Reimbursements/Refunds/Sponsorships—Conservation Education   | \$1,214.35          |
| Sales Income—Flags & Rain Barrels  | \$210.00            |
| Interest on Savings Account  | \$4.19              |
| <b>Total Income</b>  | <b>\$78,466.48</b>  |
| <b>Balance brought forward from 2020</b>   | <b>\$55,299.67</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>  | <b>\$133,766.15</b> |
| <b>Disbursements</b>   |                     |
| Annual Meeting Expense   | \$33.59             |
| Audit Expense  | \$412.00            |
| Clean Water Indiana Projects—Steuben County SWCD Clean Water Indiana (CWI) Urban Grant                                       | \$13,085.34         |
| Conservation Education Programs  | \$3,874.09          |
| Contractual Services   | \$483.00            |
| Cost-Share Projects—SWCD Funded  | \$650.00            |
| Cost-Share Projects—Federal (Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Grant for Pigeon Creek)                             | \$17,511.50         |
| Cost-Share Projects—State Funded (LARE)  | \$23,427.07         |
| Dues and Subscriptions   | \$3,464.00          |
| Office Supplies  | \$1,041.03          |
| Postage  | \$1,607.58          |
| Printing/Copying Expense   | \$4,704.15          |
| Sales Tax  | \$15.29             |
| Travel/Lodging/Mileage/Registration/Meals  | \$1,481.08          |
| Workshop/Field Day Expense—Agronomy Field Day, Forestry Field Day, Steuben County Life                                       | \$2,820.16          |
| District Vehicle—Fuel, Repairs, and Maintenance  | \$3,412.68          |
| Computer Expenses—Web Hosting  | \$282.89            |
| Insurance  | \$884.00            |
| Other Services & Charges—Bank Fees   | \$146.89            |
| Other Disbursements—Recycling/Disposal Fees  | \$25.40             |
| <b>TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS</b>   | <b>\$79,361.74</b>  |
| <b>Balance in Checking at December 31, 2021</b>  | <b>\$54,400.22</b>  |
| <b>Petty Cash</b>  | <b>\$100.00</b>     |
| <b>Savings Account</b>   | <b>\$41,879.50</b>  |
| * In addition to the grant for District Operation, the County directly paid the salary for the two District staff employees. |                     |

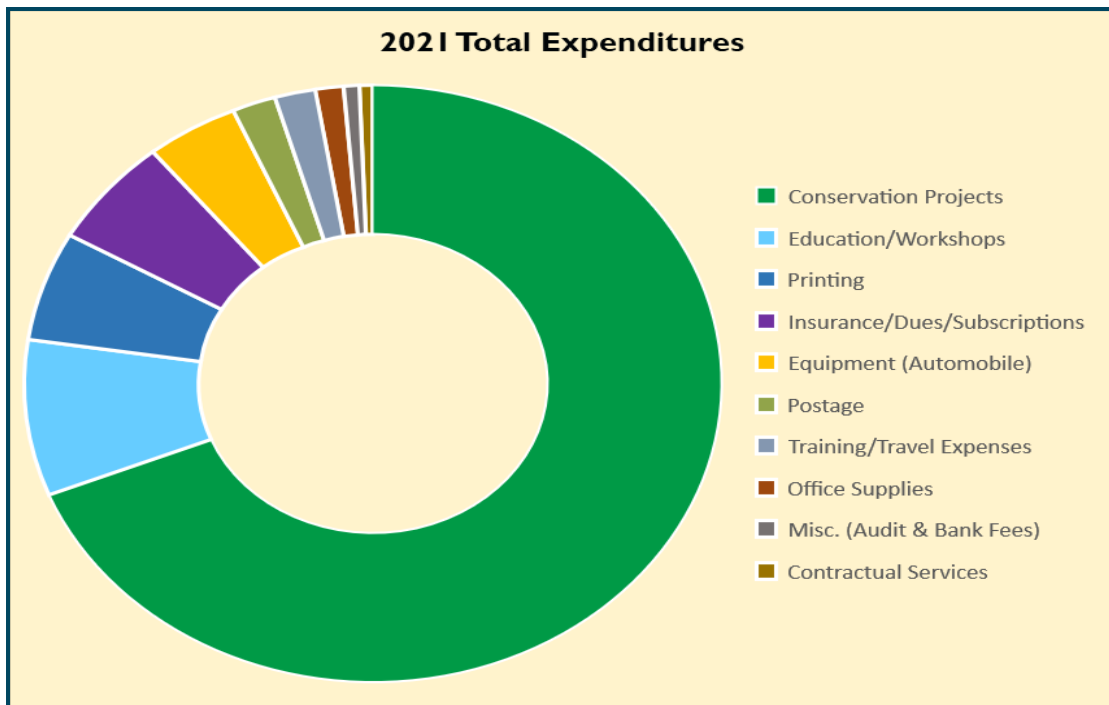


## 2021 FINANCIAL REPORT

### 2021 Total Revenue by Funding Source (\$78,466.48)



### 2021 Total Expenditures (\$79,361.74)



## AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Affiliate members are individuals, groups or organizations who choose to financially support the work of the Steuben County SWCD. Donations received from Affiliate Members are used to help support District information and education programs for youth and adults.

# THANK YOU 2021 AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Angola American Legion Post #31  
Aquatic Enhancement & Survey, Inc.  
Booth Farms—William Booth  
Carper Farm Supply, Inc.  
Caruso Enterprises, Inc. (Caruso's)  
City of Angola/Trine University MS4  
Mike and Sue Claphan (Angola, IN)  
Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy  
Bill & Diana Clingan (Hudson, IN)  
Daft Erosion Control LLC  
Dailey Farms  
Edon Farmers CoOp Association, Inc.  
Franklin Paul Group, LLC / Mary A. Filbrun  
Tom Green Engineering  
Hoham Feed & Seed  
Delores Howarth (Fremont, IN)

Lake George Conservancy Inc.  
Niann Lautzenhiser (Hamilton, IN)  
Peter Mountz (Garrett, IN)  
Sue Myers (Angola, IN)  
Kevin Northup Excavating  
S & P Earthwork  
Sandhill Environmental Services LLC  
Steuben County Lakes Council  
Stroh Farm Supply, Inc.  
Pete Thompson (Fremont, IN)  
John Williamson (Angola, IN)  
The Wilson Farm

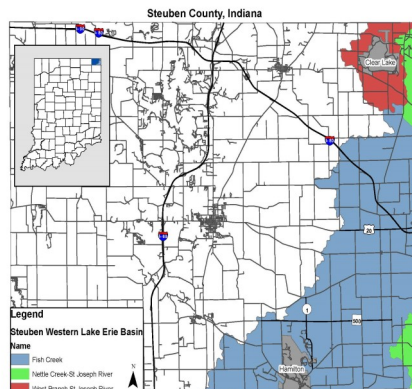
In memory of

Loyal Wilson  
Travis Wilson  
Tom Wilson

*The District Board gratefully acknowledges our 2021 Affiliate Members.*

*If you would like to help support conservation education in Steuben County, please complete the 2022 Affiliate Membership Form on the back page and mail it with your check or money order to:*

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



## THANK YOU Lake & River Enhancement Program

The Steuben County SWCD would like to thank the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) Program for awarding grant funding for the Upper St. Joseph River Watershed in 2021. This grant will provide cost-share payments to land users to apply or construct practices on their land that reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients entering area waterbodies. Areas eligible for grant funding include the sub-watersheds of the West Branch of the St. Joseph River, Nettle Creek, and Fish Creek (see map). Eligible practices include field windbreaks, filter strips, grassed waterways, pasture plantings, pollinator plots and tree plantings, among others.



## CONSERVATION PARTNERS

The Steuben County SWCD works in partnership with a diversity of federal, state, city, and local community agencies and organizations to promote and implement conservation.

We are an active partner in the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP), which is comprised of eight (8) Indiana agencies who share a common goal of providing technical, financial and educational assistance needed to implement economically and environmentally compatible land and water stewardship decisions, practices and technologies. The Steuben County SWCD is an active partner, alongside:

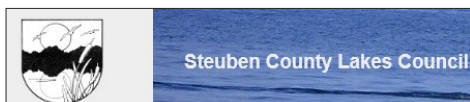
- Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, and their 92 SWCDs
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources
- ISDA Division of Soil Conservation
- Purdue Cooperative Extension Service
- State Soil Conservation Board
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



**Crowe  
Forest Management**



**Steuben County  
Government**



### ABOVE

Conservation education in action: Forester Tom Crowe discusses the importance of forest management with landowners at a Steuben County SWCD Forestry Field Day. Assistance on how to best manage woodlands can be obtained through private professional consulting foresters, Indiana DNR District Foresters, Purdue University's Cooperative Extension Service and USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Financial assistance and support for technical assistance by the USDA's NRCS is funded through the Farm Bill. Landowners interested in pursuing management in their forests are encouraged to apply for a Forest Management Plan through the USDA's "Environmental Quality Incentives Program" (EQIP). This conservation program can provide a flat rate of financial assistance for a forest owner to have a qualified forester, acting as a Technical Service Provider for NRCS, write a Forest Management Plan for their property.

*Photo courtesy of Steuben County SWCD*

There are many other agencies and organizations working to improve the health and ecology of our community. The Steuben County SWCD has worked alongside many agencies and organizations in order to accomplish large scale, mutual goals. We recognize these partners here, with enormous appreciation for the results we are achieving together.

- ♦ City of Angola/Trine University MS4 Stormwater Management Program
- ♦ Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy
- ♦ Crowe Forest Management LLC
- ♦ Friends of the St. Joseph River
- ♦ Pheasants Forever
- ♦ St. Joseph River Basin Commission
- ♦ Steuben County Government
- ♦ Steuben County Lakes Council

## SPOTLIGHT ON CONSERVATION

### What is Soil Health?

by Jamie Perry, Northeast Indiana Urban Soil Health Specialist

Soil health is the key factor in growing happy, healthy plants. So how does one encourage good soil health? The key is the following 4 principles:

#### 1) Minimize disturbance

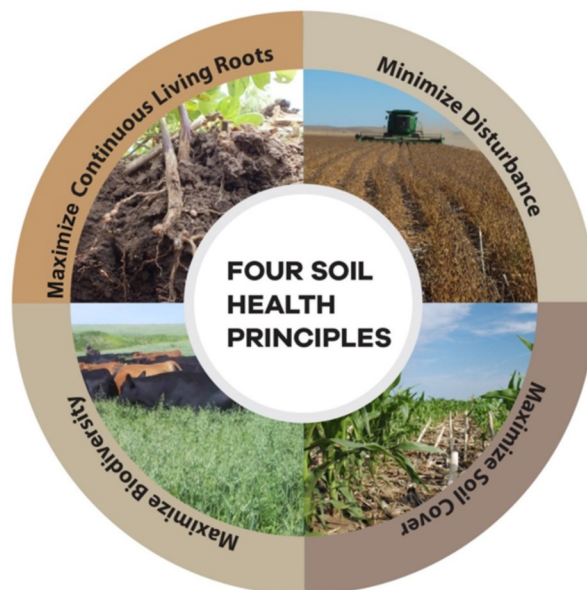
Tillage is rarely performed with the goal of improving soil health. Think of it this way: soil is a living community of microorganisms working with one another. The act of tillage is the equivalent to a hurricane, tornado, and earthquake all wrapped into one. In short, tillage destroys soil microorganisms and their environment. I understand that some tillage may be necessary to start a garden or some minimum soil disturbance may be necessary to maintain your garden. The key here is to keep it to a minimum.

#### 2) Maximize soil cover

Soil coverage can mean a few things. It can mean a densely planted vegetable bed. It can also mean using mulch on your garden beds. Finally, it could be growing cover crops in an empty garden bed. Each of these provides the same benefits. The first benefit is reducing erosion. Erosion can kill plants by sweeping soil away from their roots and denying new seeds and plantings the opportunity to germinate. With adequate coverage the soil will be protected from the erosion that rain can cause to bare soil. The second benefit is reducing soil compaction. Soil cover protects the soil from compaction that can be caused by rain. Imagine this in a normal rainfall, raindrops range in size from 1 to 7 millimeters in diameter and hit the ground going as fast as 20 miles per hour. This impact on bare soil causes it to crust over, causing the pores in the soil to clog and increasing the amount of erosion that takes place. Also, mulch retains moisture so you don't have to water as often. Additionally, mulch keeps your weed pressure down.

#### 3) Maximize continuous living roots

One of the tenets of soil health is to keep the soil planted. This could mean using cover crops or transplanting one crop after another. The last thing you want is barren soil. Why is this? First, living plants feed the soil. Living plants conduct photosynthesis and in turn expel carbon in the soil. Microorganisms in the soil feed off this carbon. These microorganisms are responsible for making nutrients in the soil available to plants. This means the more microorganisms in the soil the more plant available nutrients are in the soil. Another reason to maximize living roots



#### ABOVE

Four soil health principles graphic.  
Courtesy of  
USDA's NRCS

(continued on page 17)



## SPOTLIGHT ON CONSERVATION

*What is Soil Health?*  
(continued from page 16)

is that roots tunnel through the soil creating passageways for organisms, water, and oxygen after the roots die.

### 4) Maximize biodiversity

Biodiversity can be increased in many ways including plant variety through diversified crop rotations, and cover crop mixes with multiple species. It's important to use diverse crops, crop rotation, and cover crops to feed diverse soil microorganisms.

When it comes to soil health these are 4 factors that have the greatest impact. You may not be able to follow all these principles all the time. The key to remember is to do the best you can in your situation.

If you are interested in learning more about the importance of urban soil health, consider attending an Urban Soil Health Workshop the Steuben County SWCD is sponsoring on April 9, 2022. Jamie Perry will be discussing the soil health principles, the importance of soil testing, and additional information to help improve your



soil and increase your yields. This workshop is relevant for the backyard gardener to the small-scale farmer.



## **Save the Date!**

**Saturday, April 9, 2022**  
**9:30 a.m. until Noon**

### **Urban and Small Farmer Soil Health Workshop**



The Urban Soil Health Program is a program that promotes conservation agriculture on urban and small-scale farms. The program's goal is to promote a systematic approach to urban and small-scale agriculture by enabling local efforts to deliver technical assistance, training, education and outreach to soil health management systems to urban landowners, land-users, and other interested groups. The program aims to reach new and underserved audiences in the small-scale farming arena, and promote focused efforts specializing in urban soil health.

Jamie Perry is a local grower based in Fort Wayne, whose background includes managing a greenhouse, mentoring Burmese refugee farmers, and teaching agriculture courses at Ivy Tech Community College. His passion for soil is evident by his current attendance at Oregon State University's Soil Science program.

### LEFT

Example of healthy soil that has been managed in a long-term no-till + cover crop system.

Healthy soil gives us clean air and water, bountiful crops and forests, productive grazing lands, diverse wildlife, and beautiful landscapes. Soil health research has determined the best way to manage soil to improve its function is to utilize the four soil health principles.

*Photo courtesy of  
Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)*

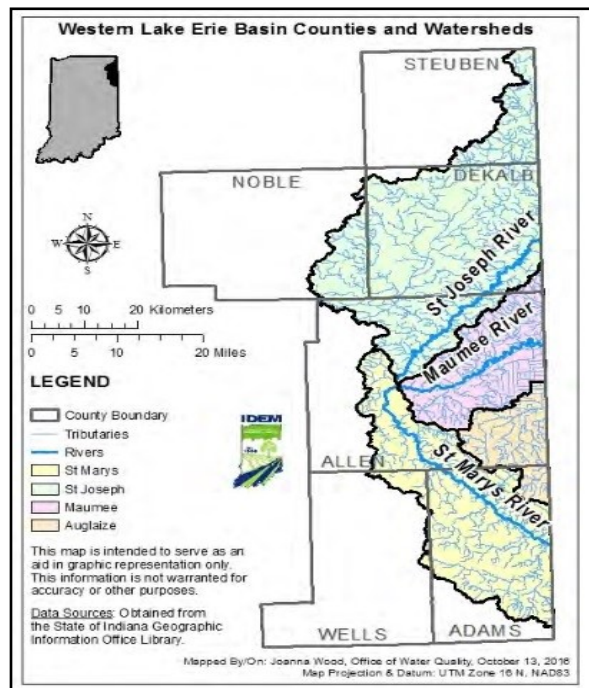
## SPOTLIGHT ON CONSERVATION

### Indiana NRCS Extends Application Cutoff for Western Lake Erie Basin Collaboration

Jerry Raynor, State Conservationist for Indiana's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced an extension of the application cutoff date for the Tri-State Western Lake Erie Basin Collaboration Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to September 30, 2022.

The partnership is led by the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, which joins forces with more than 30 partners to help farmers improve soil health, reduce phosphorus and sediment loading, and prevent harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie. The goal of the program is to work towards a 40% reduction of dissolved phosphorus by using a suite of conservation practices. The partnership targets the Maumee watershed within the Western Lake Erie Basin and covers acres in northeastern Indiana which includes portions of Steuben, DeKalb, Noble, Wells, Allen and Adams counties.

While no single approach will eliminate nutrient loading into Lake Erie, a systems approach to conservation best management practices will help reduce surface and subsurface nutrient loss. The 2018 Farm Bill provides several programs, like RCPP, that offer financial assistance to farmers, aid in the potential financial risk of conservation practice adoption and provide technical assistance for site-specific conservation plans that reduce nutrient and sediment transport.



#### ABOVE

Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB) Counties and Watersheds.

Map courtesy of  
Indiana's Domestic Action Plan for the WLEB

"We are working with partners to encourage farmers to use conservation practices that address water quality concerns and help improve soil health and agricultural production in these areas" Raynor said. "By targeting dollars to areas of greatest resource concern we can make a more positive impact on the health of our streams and rivers, and ultimately Lake Erie."

Applications are accepted on a continuous basis, but all applications for this round of funding consideration must be received by September 30, 2022.

To learn more about RCPP in Indiana, visit:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/in/programs/farmbill/rcpp/STELPRDB1248173/>

#### Steuben County SWCD

##### Upper St. Joseph River Watershed (USJRW) Grant

If you are a producer or landowner located in Steuben County's portion of the Western Lake Erie Basin, funding is also available through the Steuben County SWCD. In 2021, the District received a Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) Watershed Land Treatment Project (WLTP) grant for the implementation of a variety of conservation practices (see page 14). Program sign-up will be on a continuous basis or until the funding has been obligated.



## 2021 RIVER FRIENDLY FARMERS



Since 1999, key conservation and agricultural organizations have sponsored the River Friendly Farmer (RFF) Program. The statewide initiative recognizes farmers, who through good production management practices help keep Indiana's rivers, lakes and streams clean.

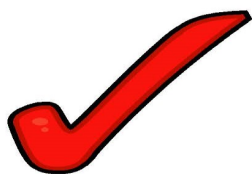
Annually, each county SWCD may nominate up to two farmers who do an outstanding job of protecting their rivers, lakes and streams through their everyday conservation management practices on the farm. In 2021, the Steuben County SWCD nominated Chris Weaver, owner/operator of Bridgewater Dairy Group, and Steuben County producer Jacob Willson.

The Bridgewater Dairy Group, based in Montpelier, Ohio, cares for 6,000 dairy cows and over

5,500 acres of cropland in Steuben County and Williams and Fulton counties in Ohio. The Bridgewater Farming – NEI Dairy is located within the Pigeon Creek Watershed. Chris believes it's their responsibility to respect the environment around their farms including manure storage areas, farm fields, and adjacent ditches and waterways. Over 50% of their farms are planted to cover crops through the winter to also minimize erosion and maintain nutrients in the soil. The primary conservation cropping systems and practices they use include dragline manure injection, buffer strips, cover crops, bi-annual soil sampling, and variable rate nutrient management.

Jacob Willson is the owner/operator of approximately 300 acres of farmland in Steuben County and over 400 acres of farmland in Fulton County, Ohio. He produces corn, soybeans and hay. The primary conservation cropping practices he uses include no-till, reduced-till, cover crops, and grassed waterways. Conservation practices are important to Jacob's operation because the ground he farms is categorized as highly erodible land (HEL). He has experienced a reduction in erosion by implementing conservation practices.

The Steuben SWCD will honor Chris and Jacob at our 2022 Annual Meeting. We salute them and all the conservation-minded farmers who do their part to improve water quality and other natural resources on their operations.



## Coming in July! 2022 Agronomy Field Day

### ALL PRODUCERS WELCOME!!

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

#### Location:

**The Andersons Waterloo Ag Center  
4743 County Rd 28, Waterloo, IN 46793**

Additional event details will be available soon on the  
DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District website  
[www.dekalbcountyswcd.com](http://www.dekalbcountyswcd.com)





**Steuben County Soil & Water  
Conservation District**

Peachtree Plaza 200  
1220 N 200 W, Suite L  
Angola, IN 46703  
260-665-3211, ext. 3

**Providing leadership and assistance in the proper use and management  
of soil, water, and related natural resources in Steuben County.**

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.

**2022 Affiliate Membership Form**

Yes, I am interested in being an Affiliate Member of the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District for calendar year 2022. 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 individuals).

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 mailed to you to acknowledge your donation  
**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

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