

# The Conservator

SUMMER 2023  
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Steuben County, Indiana Soil & Water Conservation District  
1220 N 200 W, Suite L ~ Angola, IN 46703 ~ Phone: (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.**



## Steuben County Strategic Water Quality Monitoring Project (SWQMP)



City of Angola/Trine University MS4 sponsored  
billboard (1202 N. Wayne St.; Angola, IN) to promote  
partnerships working together to protect water resources.  
Billboard on display through September 3, 2023.

*Photo courtesy of Kris Thomas, City of Angola/Trine University MS4 Coordinator*

Water is essential to all life on Earth. Without water, all living species would cease to exist, and, without safe water, the overall health of all living species will decline. Not only does water quality affect our health, but it also has a direct impact on our economy. Locally, real estate sales and tourism are dependent on water quality. With the passage of the landmark Clean Water Act in 1972, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state governments developed a set of standards that water resources should meet for them to be considered healthy. Water quality monitoring is critical in being able to characterize whether waterways are attaining their designated, or desired, uses (i.e., sources of drinking water and supporting human recreation).

So how do we ensure our local water resources are healthy for future generations? It begins with a well-designed water monitoring program. Determining water quality trends is an important component to a water quality monitoring program since many of our local lakes and streams are situated near the headwaters of major watersheds. This includes the Fawn River and Pigeon Creek watersheds, which drain to the St. Joseph River of Lake Michigan, as well as the Upper St. Joseph River, which drains to Lake Erie. To best characterize water quality, proper science, project design, and assessment are necessary. Not only will these mechanisms assist in evaluating water quality trends, they will also help to identify potential sources of impairment and provide the information necessary to understand the source(s) and work towards improving overall water quality.

With hundreds of lakes in the county, we are fortunate to have a great deal of shoreline, which creates attractive

*(continued on page 3)*

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Tim Groosbeck River Friendly  
Farmer.....2

SWCD-NRCS-ISDA Conservation  
Partnership Directory.....2

Steuben County SWQMP  
(continued from page 1).....3

National Water Quality Month .....3

Upcoming Events.....4

2023 Affiliate Members.....4

## Tim Groosbeck River Friendly Farmer



### ABOVE

Tim Groosbeck, Steuben County SWCD's nominee for the 2023 River Friendly Farmer Award. This award program began in 2000 and is sponsored by the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) and the Indiana Farm Bureau.

*Photo courtesy of Steuben County SWCD*

Congratulations to the Steuben County SWCD's 2023 River Friendly Farmer, Tim Groosbeck. Tim was nominated for this statewide award for his adoption of conservation farming practices that improve soil health and reduce possible pollution of nearby waters.

Tim was one of the early pioneers of conservation farming in Steuben County. He was one of the first individuals to purchase no-till equipment and began no-till farming in 1981-1982. He also experimented with planting cover crops in the late 80s and early 90s and has been implementing them on a more regular basis since 2018. The primary conservation practices he uses in his operation include no-till, cover crops, and soil sampling, and he is currently in the process of developing a nutrient management plan.

Conservation practices are important to Tim's farming operation to improve soil health and tilth, which ultimately helps him reduce input costs and improve yields. His use of cover crops and no-till help reduce evaporation, prevent soil erosion, maintain an even soil temperature, and enrich the soil. Soil sampling helps him make more informed fertility decisions and helps to address potential issues to achieve better yields. No-till and cover crops help protect the soil from wind and water erosion, thereby reducing the amount of water runoff from the fields.

He is a lifelong resident of Steuben County; in fact, his great grandfather purchased the farm where Tim and his family currently live, in 1919.

## SWCD - NRCS - ISDA CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORY

### Board of Supervisors:

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

### Associate Supervisors:

Timothy Groosbeck  
Brad Hamlin  
Daniel Oberst  
Ryan Waite

### SWCD Staff:

Janel Meyer, *Administrative Coordinator*  
Aimee Wentworth, *Resource Conservationist*

### NRCS Staff:

Arthur Franke, *District Conservationist*

### Indiana State Department of Agriculture Staff:

Kate Sanders, *Resource Specialist*

steubenswcd@gmail.com  
www.steubenswcd.org

### Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District

Learn why the Steuben County SWCD was formed  
and how we accomplish our mission at:

[https://youtu.be/w8KU\\_ngslcY](https://youtu.be/w8KU_ngslcY)



Scan this symbol with  
your smartphone to  
link to our website.

## Steuben County SWQMP (continued from page 1)

areas for housing. The desire for people to be near lakes, along with the associated rise in lakefront development, has resulted in an increased concern related to human activities' effects on water quality. One major concern is *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), a bacterium that, when detected in water at high levels, is indicative of fecal contamination from warm-blooded mammals, such as humans. High levels of *E. coli* can present a direct public health threat as it may cause serious illness in people. Additional concerns about water quality include nutrient and sediment levels in lakes and streams.

Excessive nutrients can lead to harmful algal blooms and beach closures, while high inputs of sediments can adversely affect aquatic life and can lead to increased maintenance costs associated with cleaning out regulated drains. Sources of *E. coli*, nutrients, and sediments include stormwater runoff, septic systems, and agricultural runoff.

Beginning in the early 2000s, the Steuben County Lakes Council (SCLC) responded to these concerns by supporting annual summer water quality monitoring of over 60 sites that include major lakes and some tributaries flowing into and out of various lakes in Steuben County. One of its partner agencies, The City of Angola/Trine University MS4 (COA/TU MS4) program, monitors several sites along tributaries and regulated drains that flow through industrial and urbanized areas of Angola, then outfall into the lakes monitored by the SCLC program. The data collected revealed the extent of the *E. coli* issue in the county, but the data provided limited insight into the cause(s) of the problem. In response to the need for more robust water quality data, vested stakeholders from the SCLC, COA/TU MS4, Steuben County Health Department (HD), Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC), Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG), AmeriCorps, and Trine University formed a committee with the goal to initiate a strategic water quality monitoring program in June 2023 to identify the sources of *E. coli*, nutrients, and sediment in surface waters. Each of these organizations share a strong sense of stewardship to

protect water resources not just for Steuben County but for communities living downstream.

The monitoring program collects a suite of water quality information from 10 surface water sites throughout Steuben County on a weekly basis for 20 weeks (through October). The water quality monitoring involves the use of a portable water quality meter, the HydroLab HL7 Multiparameter Sonde, manufactured by OTT HydroMet. Monitoring also involves the collection of water samples for laboratory analysis, including samples being sent to the Indiana State Department of Health to determine/measure the presence/absence of caffeine. Caffeine levels are being monitored at all sites as part of a pilot project to determine the feasibility of using caffeine as a cost-effective indicator of potential sewage contamination.

It is the committee's goal to establish a sustainable, long-term water quality monitoring program. It is a common goal among many county/state agencies and organizations to achieve high quality, safe water conditions for the lakes and streams throughout the county. Each partner in this project has agreed to provide funding and/or in-kind contributions. Information on this program will be shared in a meaningful way so that the public are made aware of the ongoing efforts to protect water quality.

The Steuben County SWCD would like to thank the committee and all contributing partners, including the Pleasant Township Trustee, 101 Lakes Trust, Inc., and the Steuben County Community Foundation for their project support.



### LEFT

The portable water quality meter, the HydroLab HL7 Multiparameter Sonde, used to collect various water quality parameters for the Steuben County Strategic Water Quality Monitoring Program (SWQMP).

## National Water Quality Month

August is National Water Quality Month, dedicated to making the most of the relatively small amount of fresh water we have, because having clean water is vital to our individual health, collective agricultural needs, and the needs of our environment. This month reminds us to take a moment to consider how important water sources are not just for humans, but also to the other inhabitants of water ecosystems. How is water important to you? What can you do to help improve our precious water resources?





## Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Angola, IN 46703

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[www.steubenswcd.org](http://www.steubenswcd.org)



[facebook.com/SteubenIndianaSWCD](https://facebook.com/SteubenIndianaSWCD)

Providing Leadership and Assistance in the Proper Use and Management  
of Soil, Water, and Related Natural Resources in Steuben County.

Please help us **go green** by subscribing to the newsletter via **e-mail**. Visit our website and click on the Newsletter tab, or call the office to change your subscription to *The Conservator* at any time.

*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, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.*

## Upcoming Events

- September 4<sup>th</sup> County Offices Closed  
Labor Day Holiday
- September 6<sup>th</sup> Roemke Farms Soil Health Field Day  
7:30 - 3:00 PM (Harlan, IN)
- September 13<sup>th</sup> Steuben SWCD Local Working Group  
5:00 PM (Community Center)
- September 13<sup>th</sup> Steuben SWCD Board Meeting  
5:30 PM (Community Center)
- September 19 - October 24<sup>th</sup> Steuben County Life Program  
Tuesdays, 6 - 8:15 PM
- September 18<sup>th</sup> - September 22<sup>nd</sup> EPA Septic Smart Week  
([www.epa.gov/septic/septicsmart-week](http://www.epa.gov/septic/septicsmart-week))
- September 23<sup>rd</sup> Free Fishing Day for Indiana Residents  
Fishing license or trout/salmon  
stamp not required to fish  
Indiana's public waters
- October 9<sup>th</sup> County Offices Closed  
Columbus Day Holiday
- October 11<sup>th</sup> Steuben SWCD Board Meeting  
5:00 PM (Angola USDA  
Service Center)

*\*\*For more events and updates please check our website\*\*  
Times and places of meetings subject to change*

## 2023 Affiliate Members

### Bronze Level

Carper Farm Supply  
Bill & Diana Clingan (Hudson)  
Hoham Feed & Seed  
Niann Lautzenhiser (Hamilton)  
Karen Spake (Angola)  
Stroh Farm Supply

### Silver Level

Aquatic Enhancement &  
Survey, Inc.  
City of Angola/Trine U. MS4  
Clear Lake Township Land  
Conservancy  
Crowe Forest Management, LLC  
Tom & Alice Filbrun (Angola)  
James Holse (Ashley)  
Deloris Howarth (Fremont)  
Peter Mountz (Garrett)  
Kevin Northup Excavating  
Robert L. Parker (Pleasant Lake)  
Sandhill Environmental  
Services, LLC  
John Williamson, Jr. (Angola)

### Gold Level

Booth Farms

Raymond Lauer (Fremont)  
S & P Earthwork, INC  
Stoy Farms

### Platinum Level

101 Sheds  
Angola Seed & Supply, LLC  
Dailey Farms  
Edon Farmers Co-Op  
Farm Credit Mid-America  
Tom Green Engineering  
Holman Excavating  
Chuck & Nila Howard (Hamilton)  
Lake George Conservancy, Inc.  
Jim & Jean Parsell (Angola)  
Dewey & Marcia Powers (Angola)  
Steuben County Lakes Council  
Steve Schroeder (Fremont)  
Lynn Wernet (Angola)  
Bob & Connie Wilson (Hudson)  
The Wilson Farm  
Fred Wooley (Fremont)

### Platinum Plus Level

Angola American Legion  
Post #31