

The Conservator

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Steuben County, Indiana Soil & Water Conservation District

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

Steuben County Spring Tillage Transect Results

Each year the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), in conjunction with the Indiana Conservation Partnership¹, completes a spring tillage transect survey to collect information on tillage practices, residue cover, and the crops planted from 280 points across Steuben County (a subset of all the agricultural acreage located within Steuben County). The data gathered from this survey can be used to track cropland use, conservation cropping systems being utilized, cover crop adoption, and the amount of crop residue remaining on fields, which can be used to estimate soil erosion rates. The tillage transect also allows the opportunity for the SWCD to observe and discuss the conditions, needs, and successes related to the natural resources of the county.

The graphs on page 3 show the estimated tillage practices for crops grown in 2024, based upon the transect survey conducted this spring. The information presented is from the Steuben County Spring 2025 Conservation Survey Report, compiled by the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA).

To understand the transect data, it is important to know the different tillage terms. Conventional tillage is any tillage system which disturbs all of the soil surface, leaving less than 15% residue cover after planting. Reduced tillage is any tillage system leaving 15% - 75% residue cover after planting. No-till is a method where the residue from last year's crop is left undisturbed until planting.



LEFT

Tillage examples - from left to right, conventional tillage, reduced tillage, and no-till.

Photo courtesy of Steuben County SWCD.

¹The Indiana Conservation Partnership is comprised of eight Indiana agencies and organizations who share a common goal of promoting conservation. To that end, the mission of the Indiana Conservation Partnership is to provide technical, financial and educational assistance needed to implement economically and environmentally compatible land and water stewardship decisions, practices and technologies (<https://icp.iaswcd.org>).

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Scan the QR code with your smartphone to link to our website.

Soil Guardians of DeKalb-Steuben



The DeKalb and Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), Purdue Extension, and Urban Soil Health are on a health kick for soil! The Districts and Extension have joined together to form a new working group, “**Soil Guardians of DeKalb-Steuben.**”

Our Mission: The Soil Guardians of DeKalb-Steuben will focus on urban soil health and help educate and advocate to improve soil health on urban and small-scale agricultural land and gardens.

Our Program: Upon request, the Soil Guardians of DeKalb-Steuben will visit small-scale farms and gardens to discuss land uses and goals. A soil sample will be collected and sent to a local laboratory for analysis. A follow-up site visit will be conducted to discuss the details of the soil report and next management steps. This initiative will also offer workshops, field days, technical assistance on soil health practices, and help connect growers with resources.

Who Is Eligible? Community gardens, home gardens, school gardens, church gardens, hospital/governmental gardens, and any other specialty growing operation for DeKalb and Steuben County residents. The best part is its FREE to the landowner.



Scan the QR Code to sign-up!
(see eligibility requirements, above)



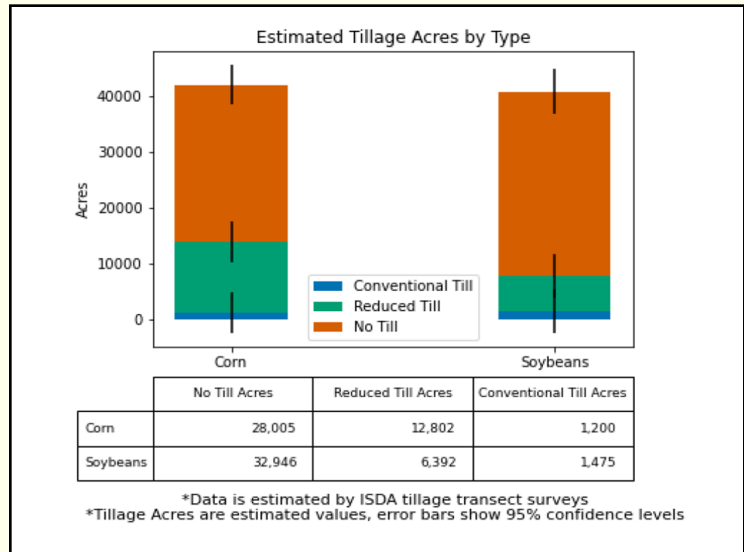
If you are not a resident of DeKalb or Steuben or are not eligible for the program, you can still contact the SWCD for technical assistance on soil health management. We would be more than happy to assist!

Steuben County Spring Tillage Transect Results *(continued from page 1)*

The **Estimated Tillage Acres By Type** graph (right) shows that corn acres have the highest proportion of no-till (28,005 acres), followed by reduced till (12,802 acres), and a smaller portion in conventional till (1,200 acres).

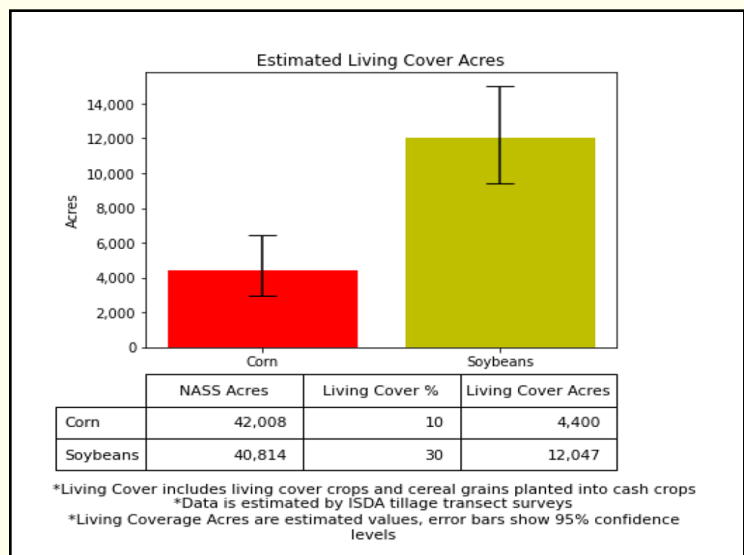
Soybeans followed a similar pattern, with 32,946 acres in no-till, 6,392 acres in reduced till, and 1,475 acres in conventional till. These results indicate a strong preference for conservation tillage practices - especially no-till among both corn and soybean producers in Steuben County.

Note: Error bars on the chart represent 95% confidence intervals, indicating the reliability of the estimates. The figures are estimates, but offer reliable insight into local tillage trends.



The **Estimated Living Cover Acres** graph (right) illustrates the use of living cover crops on corn and soybean fields in Steuben County following the 2024 growing season. Based on the data collected, of the 42,008 acres of corn, an estimated 10% (or 4,400 acres) were planted to living cover crops, which include cover crop species and cereal grains planted into cash crops. In contrast, soybeans fields had a significantly higher adoption rate, with 30% of 40,814 acres- approximately 12,047 acres - utilizing living cover. These results suggest a stronger integration of conservation practices in soybean production compared to corn, contributing to improved soil health and erosion control.

Note: Error bars reflect a 95% confidence intervals, indicating the reliability of the estimates.



It is difficult to generalize any tillage usage as either being used any more or less widely across the county over the years because there are such fluctuations in tillage methods. Tillage practices change from year to year for many reasons. When looking at the numbers it is important to keep local conditions in mind, such as precipitation and soil moisture. This is the best way to determine whether trends are continued adoption of conservation practices or if trends are more weather-dependent and simply a matter of how many working days are suitable for operations like tillage.

Overall, conservation tillage is performed on a

considerable percentage of acres in the county. This saves the producer money and wear and tear on equipment by having to take fewer passes across the fields. It also maintains and improves water quality by keeping sediment and nutrients on the fields and out of local water bodies. This is mutually beneficial to the producer and their land as well as the environment.

The SWCD is proud of the efforts of so many producers who are working hard to preserve their soil and water quality for those around them. However, there is still room for continued innovation to decrease tillage systems and increase cover crop adoption in Steuben County.



Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District

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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.

The Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District and its Partnership Agencies are equal opportunity employers, lenders, and serviced providers.

2025 Affiliate Members

BRONZE LEVEL

101 Sheds/Palette Boekhout (*Fremont*)
Caruso Enterprises, Inc.
Bill & Diana Clingan (*Hudson*)
Daft Erosion Control LLC
Hoham Feed & Seed
Niann Lautzenhiser (*Hamilton*)

Ronald L. Parker (*Pleasant Lake*)
Karen Spake (*Angola*)
Stroh Farm Supply, Inc. Janet Young (*Hudson*)
Peg Zeis (*Fremont*)
Judy Zinn (*Fremont*)

SILVER LEVEL

City of Angola MS4
Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy
Crowe Forest Management, LLC
Tom & Mary Alice Filbrun (*Angola*)
James Holse (*Ashley*)
Delores Howarth (*Fremont*)

LOW McClish Lake Association
Peter Mountz (*Garrett*)
Kevin Northup Excavating
Steve Schroeder (*Fremont*)
John Williamson, Jr. (*Angola*)

GOLD LEVEL

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PLATINUM LEVEL

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Robert Amstutz, Jr. (*Pleasant Lake*)
Angola American Legion Post #31*
Angola Seed & Supply, LLC
Aquatic Enhancement & Survey, Inc.
Budreau Ins. & Fin. Services Inc./
Austin Budreau
Booth Farms (*Orland*)
Cameron Memorial Community Hospital
Catalpa Cove Family Giving Fund
CMR Family Farm (*Fremont*)
Dailey Farms (*Angola*)
Ecosystems Connections Institute, LLC
Edon Farmers Co-Op Association, Inc.
Farm Credit Mid-America

Tom Green Engineering
Howard Farms (*Hamilton*)
Lake George Conservancy, Inc.
Raymond Lauer (*Fremont*)
Parsell Farms (*Angola*)
Dewey & Marcia Powers (*Angola*)
S & P Earthwork
SC & R Enterprises, Inc./
Shane & Chanda Swager (*Angola*)
Steuben County Lakes Council, Inc.
Stoy Farms (*Ashley*)
Vestil Manufacturing Company
Wilson 85 LLC/Wilson Farm (*Hudson*)
Fred Wooley (*Fremont*)

*\$1,000 Donor

Upcoming Events:

SAVE THE DATE

2025 Agronomy Field Day
Tuesday, July 22nd

Hosted by:



Additional details about the July 22, 2025 Agronomy Field Day at The Andersons will be available soon on our website and Facebook page.