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The Conservator

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 wise use and management of soil, water, and related natural resources in Steuben County.

Don't Leave Your Soil Out in the Cold

As we move from summer into fall, it's easy to focus on changing leaves, cooler temperatures, and preparing our fields and gardens for winter. But there's another seasonal change happening beneath our feet—and it's one worth paying attention to.

Our soil is getting ready for winter, too.

Healthy soil is the foundation of a healthy landscape. It provides nutrients for plants, stores water, supports countless organisms, and helps reduce runoff and erosion. When soil is left bare, however, fall rains and winter weather can wash or blow valuable topsoil away.

ABOVE
Snow on a grass cover crop.
Photo courtesy of Mike Werling
Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative
(https://ccsin.org)

The good news? There are several simple things landowners can do to help protect it.

- **Keep Soil Covered.** Cover crops, mulch, grass, native plants, and crop residue all help protect the soil surface from rain and wind.
- **Slow down the water.** Check gutters and downspouts and make sure runoff isn't creating bare or eroding areas. Rain gardens and native plantings can also help capture and filter stormwater. Keep soil covered with cover crops, crop residue, or other vegetation to reduce erosion and protect valuable topsoil.
- **Put those leaves to work.** Instead of removing leaves from your property or burning them, consider mulching them into your lawn, adding them to a compost pile, or using them as a protective layer around garden plants.
- **Plant for the future.** Fall can be an excellent time to establish trees, shrubs, and many native plants. Their roots help hold soil in place and can provide benefits for years to come. Field borders, field edges, and other

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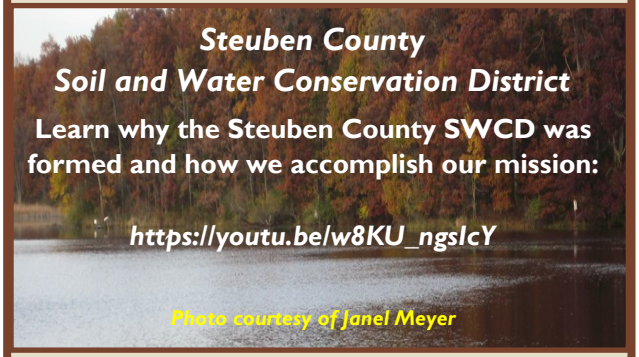

Leave the Leaves!
Leaves are habitat, not trash.
Scan to learn more:

https://xerces.org/leave-the-leaves

Don't Leave Your Soil Out in the Cold

(continued from page 1)

marginal areas can be good places for perennial vegetation that helps reduce erosion, protect soil, and provide wildlife habitat. Timing is critical - the golden rule is to plant 6 - 8 weeks before our area's average first hard freeze, which can occur anytime between October 11 and October 20.

Every patch of protected soil contributes to a healthier watershed. Whether you manage farmland, a large property, or a small backyard, **the conservation choices you make today can help protect our soil and water for tomorrow.**

This fall, take a look at your property and ask yourself: **Where is my soil protected - and where could it use a little help?**

Your local Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is here to help you find conservation solutions that work for your land. Whether you're looking to reduce soil erosion, improve soil health, protect water quality, establish native plants or field borders, or enhance wildlife habitat, we can help you explore options and connect you with technical resources, planning assistance, and potential conservation programs available. Don't wait to get started - find the right next step for your land today!

Where Does a Raindrop Go?

Have you ever wondered where a raindrop goes after it falls in your field or backyard? Check out a fascinating interactive website called **River Runner** to find out.

Created by data analyst Sam Learner, River Runner allows you to click anywhere on the map and watch a virtual raindrop travel downstream through streams, rivers, and watersheds.

Drop a raindrop on your home, farm, school, or favorite outdoor location. Watch how it follows the landscape, connecting smaller waterways to larger rivers and eventually reaching its destination.

The experience is more than just a fun map. It provides a visual reminder that **we all live in a watershed**.

Rain that falls on our properties doesn't simply

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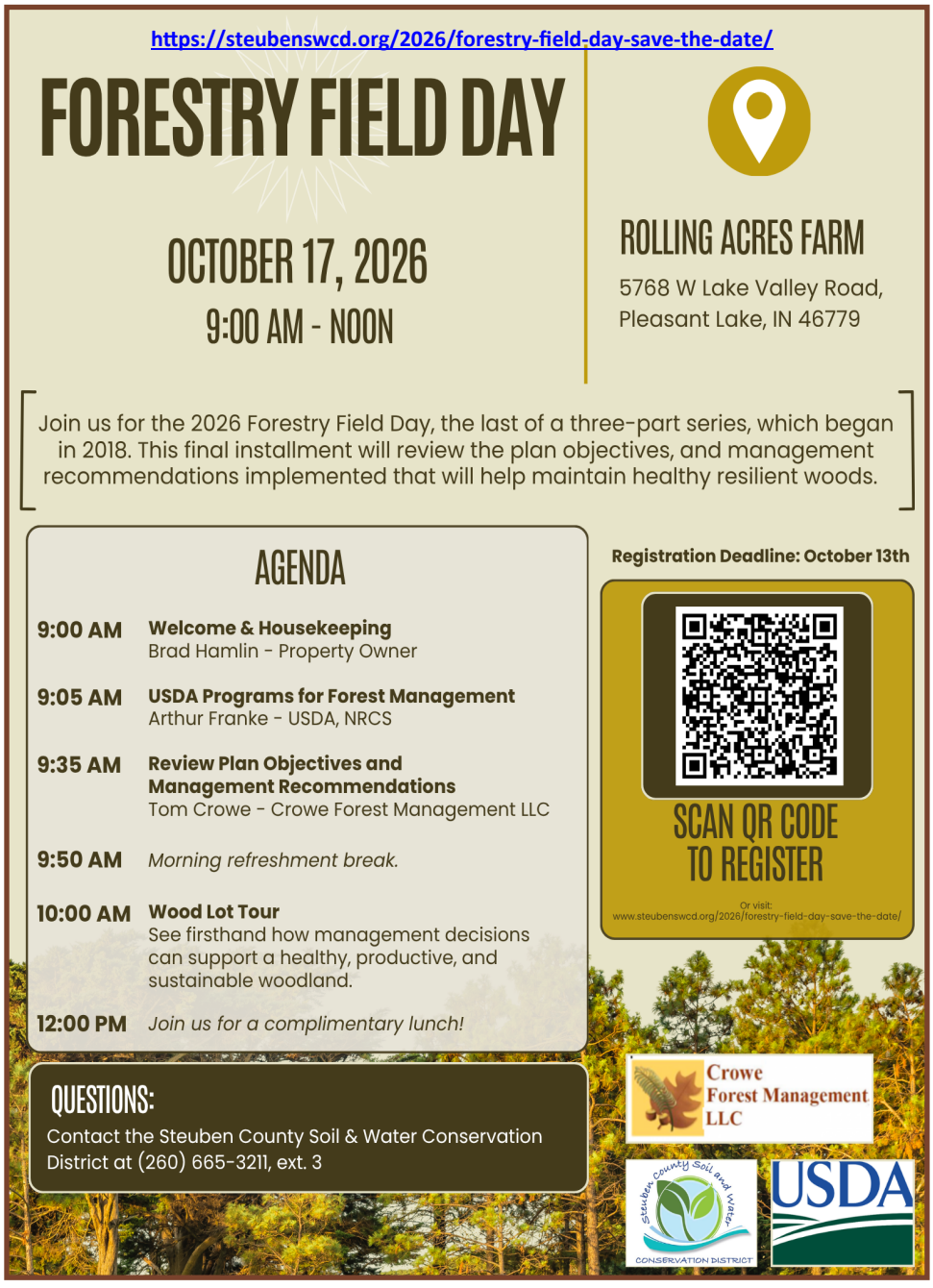
2026 Forestry Field Day



The Steuben County SWCD is pleased to present a **free Forestry Field Day** on Saturday, October 17.

This workshop is the final event in a three-part series which began in 2018. Even if you missed the earlier field days, we encourage you to attend. Each event is designed to provide valuable information about forest management and woodland health.

This final field day will focus on the Timber Stand Improvement plan at Rolling Acres Farm, located at 5768 W. Lake Valley Road, Pleasant Lake, IN. Participants will observe how the woodland has responded three years after the timber harvest. Timber Stand Improvement is used to improve and maintain healthy, resilient woodlands. The objectives are to improve timber quality, overall forest health, and wildlife habitat.

Our speakers will include experts from Crowe Forest Management and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Join us for this informative workshop and the opportunity to ask forestry experts questions about managing your own property.

Please register online by October 13, 2026. You may also RSVP by calling the Steuben County SWCD at (260) 665-3211, ext. 3.

Where Does a Raindrop Go? *(continued from page 2)*

disappear. Depending on the landscape, it may soak into the soil or become runoff that eventually enters a nearby stream or river.

Following a raindrop can help us understand our connection to water. What happens on the land upstream can affect water quality downstream.

Soil, nutrients, grass clippings, and other pollutants carried by runoff can travel through the watershed. That means conservation practices on farms, in backyards, and throughout our communities can make a difference far beyond the property where they are implemented.

RIVER RUNNER

Scan me!

https://river-runner.samlearner.com/

Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District

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

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

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Caruso Enterprises, Inc.
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Daft Erosion Control LLC
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Wilson 85 LLC/Wilson Farm *(Hudson)*
Fred Wooley *(Fremont)*

https://steubenswcd.org/affiliate-members/

**$300 Donor; **$2,000 Donor*

Our Summer

Featured are just a few highlights from this year's summer youth education events.

Anthony Wayne Boy Scout Camp

Conservation Camp

Angola Middle School Water Quality Field Day