



Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District

1486 Executive Blvd. Suite A • Jasper, IN 47546

812-482-1171 x3 • www.duboisswcd.org

Spring, 2018

The Conservation Conversation

Composting

Composting is meant to be simple. Take some organic matter, add a little bit of oxygen and moisture, and wait for it all to decompose into some of the finest homemade amendments that you can add to your garden. Composting helps reduce waste going to the landfill. Approximately 25-30% of our trash could be composted.

Even with benign neglect, a compost pile will eventually produce useable organic matter. However, if you put some effort into managing your pile you will create compost more efficiently.

To function properly, a compost container, whether built or purchased should be at least 9 cubic feet. It should allow for air to pass easily through and for moisture to be added to the mix. The smaller the pieces of matter that are placed in the compost heap or container, the more rapidly decomposition will occur. A mixture of green matter and dry matter should be added to maintain the health of the pile. Green matter is a source of nitrogen and consists of grass clippings and kitchen scraps. Brown matter is a source of carbon and consists of dried leaves, straw and wood chips.

Many local stores sell plastic compost bins with various features and design capabilities. You can also build your own structure out of wire, wood, or cinder blocks. It all depends on your land and how much compost you desire to create. If you have a small garden in the city, you may prefer to buy a plastic barrel that will rotate your compost and keep out small critters. If you live on multiple acres in the country, you may choose to build a three-compartment compost pile with cinder lock dividing walls to separate early compost matter from partially decomposed matter and finished product.

Plan the placement of your bin carefully. Never place a compost pile on concrete. Instead try to find a spot on your property that has access to water, will allow for adequate air circulation around the bin, is out of full sun, and is away from trees, vines, and wooden structures.

No matter what type of structure or bin you choose, the center of the decomposing pile will increase in temperature. This is a result of the bacteria working to break down the organic matter. The advantage of this heat is that it will kill weed seeds and sterilize your compost. You can help your compost pile speed up decomposition by moving the material around in the bin giving materials that were on the edges a chance to decompose in the center of the pile. *To receive a free copy of compost bin plans, please contact Dubois County SWCD, 1486 Executive Blvd, Jasper, or call 812-482-1171, ext 3.*

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Conservation Farmer Award, Brown Receives Service Award

The Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District presents an annual award to a Dubois County farmer who uses good soil and water conservation practices on their farm and puts extra effort into conserving natural resources. During the SWCD's Annual Meeting held at Shiloh United Methodist Church in Jasper, Indiana on Tuesday, February 6th, 2018, Tony Sanders, Ag Lender from Old National Bank and Brenda Sermersheim, Ag Lender from German American Bank presented the 2018 Otto J. Bauer Outstanding Conservation Farmer of the Year to Kenny Beckman.



Beckman's Land is located in Marion Township near Dubois, Indiana. The farm was purchased in 1979 by his parents. After his father developed knee problems, Kenny began taking over the farming duties. He now owns approximately 500 acres and rents another 100 acres. While he is working on the farm full time, he employs some very good part-time workers during harvesting and planting seasons; including a nephew, a cousin, and several friends. He produces corn, soybeans, and is a contract hog raiser. His pasture fields are rent to others.

Lots of changes have been seen since the farm has been under his management. His is a big proponent for no till and focuses on doing right by the different practices and programs for conservation tillage, forest management, and drainage management. After observing the county highway workers cleaning the ditches around his property after rainstorms, he began no tilling practices and incorporating cover crops. Beckman believes good drainage practices and no tilling go hand-in-hand. He has also included Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) practices on woodland areas and installed dry dams and catch basins. These practices increase the levels of organic material in the fields and help prevent erosion which increase acre profitability. He plans to do more conservation practices as finances allow. Beckman stated how helpful NRCS was in educating him on the many different conservation practices currently available.

When asked about Beckman's biggest farming challenges, he responded that weather dictates when and what a farmer can do on his property. He has also observed how volatile weather has become and occurs more frequently. Another challenge he realizes is commodity pricing.

Beckman is a Patoka River Conservancy Board Member and retired after 23 years as a Dubois Fire Department Board Member. He belongs to St. Rafael-St. Isadore parish cluster and is also a member of St. Vincent de Paul society.



Judi Brown was recognized for her 20 years of service at Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District on January 3rd, 2018. Presenting her certificate of achievement were Dubois County Commissioners Chad Blessinger and Elmer Brames.

Forest Stewardship Award Winners

Ron and Matt Lueken of Lueken Livestock and Grain, Inc. were presented the OFS Brands Forest Stewardship Award by Scott Reckelhoff, Property Manager of OFS Brands at the Shiloh United Methodist Church in Jasper during Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District's Annual Meeting held Tuesday, February 6th, 2018. The SWCD Board of Supervisors annually recognizes forest landowners who carry out wise forestry stewardship programs on their land. Dubois County Forestlands provide numerous environmental benefits from wildlife habitat to buffering and filtering of water runoff. The forestry industry also helps support a large sector of our economy as the 6th largest industry in Indiana providing jobs and recreation.



The year's recipient, Ron and Matt Lueken, a father-son team owns approximately 135 acres of forestland in Hall and Jefferson Townships. They are the 4th and 5th generation as stewards to this property continuing for 130 years. The property was previously held by Ralph Lueken, Ron's father until Ron and Matt purchased it in 2013.

The Luekens want to continue the traditions of keeping their forestlands strong and sustainable. They have long practiced wise forest management using DNR and consulting foresters to guide their management decisions to meet their long-term goals. These goals include having a positive financial return, using the property for hunting and wildlife, protecting the family legacy, and practicing sustainable management to pass on a healthy, productive forest for future generations. Their woodlands provide recreational hunting and natural buffer strips. Natural buffer strips establish protected zones which lessen the impact of human activity and land disturbance. Their forest lands are also connected to their neighbor's forested areas which provide a habitat and movement corridors for many species of birds, animals, reptiles, fish, and invertebrates. This preserve a healthier ecosystem.

Under their guidance the forests have improved their productivity, riparian areas have been reforested, and livestock has been excluded from the woods. They have used Multi-Resource Management foresters, Thom Kinney and Doug Brown, for their select timber harvest in 1995 and 2014. These were followed up with NRCS EQIP Timber Stand Improvement and some invasive controls. The Luekens express how much they appreciated the expertise and guidance they have been given over the years.

Some of the challenges they have dealt with have been battling invasive species vines and tree diseases; such as emerald ash borer. Matt also included topography as an issue because of the steepness in the land. Matt and Ron are concerned about preventing erosion on the slopes above the creeks.

Both the Luekens are members of Schnellville Conservation Club, the Dubois County Cattlemen's Association, and Sacred Heart Church in Schnellville.

Middle Patoka Watershed and Buffers

The future of our fresh water resource is closely linked to land use decisions made by the private landowner, who can protect our waters through conservation and best management practices.

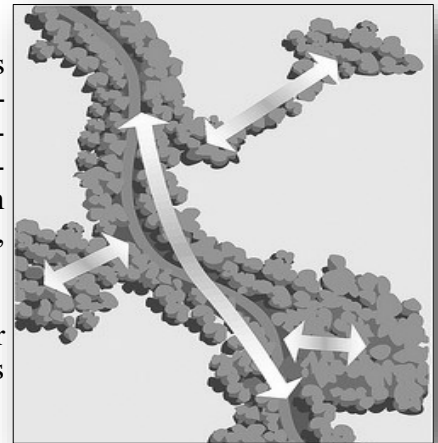
There are cost-share dollars available for landowners and producers in the Patoka River Watershed to implement Best Management Practices that improve water quality by reducing off-site sedimentation and/or nutrient loads to receiving waters. Funds are allocated on a first-come, first served basis. A signed 319 application is all that is needed to begin the process.

*Stop by the Dubois County SWCD office
or call Watershed Coordinator, Julie Loehr at 812-779-7924
for more information or to sign up for the programs.*

Ecological Buffers are protected zones established around sensitive or critical areas; such as, wildlife breeding or hibernation habitats, streams, and wetlands to lessen the impacts of human activity and land disturbance.

Significant research exists documenting the importance and effectiveness of maintaining riparian buffer around streams, lakes, and wetlands to minimize impacts to water quality. Most of this research is derived from monitoring responses to forestry and agricultural practices. In addition to reducing development impacts to water quality, riparian buffers have also been shown to provide habitat and movement corridors for many species of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and invertebrates.

Upland and interior buffers help lessen impacts to species that rely on other habitat types; such as, caves, or interior forest habitat, and protect areas important to breeding, rearing, and hibernation.



The Nature Conservancy recommends the following Conservation Practices: 1) Preserve a buffer of at least 330 feet around freshwater habitats to support fish and aquatic wildlife and to reduce sediment runoff, provide flood retention, moderate stream flow, maintain water temperatures, and provide vegetation inputs that form habitat in aquatic systems. 2) Preserve canopy cover over headwater and cold water streams to maintain water temperatures and physical habitat. 3) Avoid disturbance to sensitive species and habitat to identify occurrences and develop site specific management plans. 4) Maintain vegetated buffers that are continuous along and around sensitive features, connect lowland and upland areas, and are composed of natural vegetation. 5) Monitor buffers during and after construction to ensure they are maintained throughout all phases of development, including identification and treatment of invasive plant species.



Invasive Species—Mile-a-Minute Vine

Mile-a-Minute vine is native to East Asia. It likely was accidentally introduced to North America on imported nursery stock through a landscaping nursery in central Pennsylvania in the mid-to late 1930s. Mile-a-Minute is a member of the buckwheat family. This vine can grow as much as 6 inches in a day and can reach heights of more than 25 feet in a growing season. It forms very dense, tangled mats, growing over shrubs, small trees and up the sides of forest edges.



It can be found growing along roadsides, forest edges, utility right of ways, stream banks and in recently logged forests. It can tolerate partial shade. Mile-a-Minute seeds germinate in early spring (March-April). Flowering begins in early June and first seeds begin to ripen in early July. Flower and fruiting continues through first frost by late October when the entire plant dies. Roots are shallow and fibrous. The leaves are simple, alternate, light green and a nearly perfect triangle shape. Clusters of small white rather inconspicuous flowers emerge and develop into clusters of deep, iridescent blue berry-like fruits. Each fruit contains a single black or reddish-black hard seed. Seeds are dispersed by birds and mammals; including chipmunks, squirrels, and deer which eat the fruit. Floodwaters facilitate long distance dispersal of seed. Because Mile-a-Minute vine flowers are self-fertile, a single seed can start a whole new colony. Seeds may remain viable in the soil for at least five years.

Mile-a-Minute vine may be confused with the native arrow-leaved tearthumb or halberd-leaved tearthumb. Each is armed with recurved barbs along their stems. Other possible look-a-likes include the bindweeds and climbing false buckwheat. Neither have the recurved barbs along the stems.

An official sighting of the Mile-a-Minute vine has been identified in Monroe County, Indiana. There are many documented infestations in southeast Ohio bordering the Ohio River. Mile-a-minute's rapid growth and dense infestations, along with its very early spring germination, gives this species a very substantial competitive advantage over most native places species. It overwhelms, shades out and displaced many native plant herbaceous species. It can overtop, shade out, weigh down, and even break taller herbaceous plants, woody shrubs, and tree seedlings and saplings. Mile-a-Minute infestations reduce plant species diversity and disrupt wildlife habitat. Where timber harvesting occurs, Mile-a-Minute vine destroys tree seedlings and saplings, resulting in forest regeneration failures. It quickly overruns utility rights-of way where herbicides are used to control unwanted woody vegetation. Control and restoration costs of areas infested with Mile-a-Minute range from \$150 to \$1,240 per acre. The density of barbed stems and leaves makes movement very difficult for both animals and humans, negatively impacting wildlife use and human recreational use of infested areas. It is a pest in nurseries, orchards, and landscape plantings. It is listed as a noxious weed in seven states.

Manual control is feasible only for the occasional plant, small infestations, or sensitive areas where herbicides cannot be used. Hand pulling is easy with protective gloves. Repeated mowing beginning before fruit set and through the growing season to first frost prevents seed production. Mowing should be done low to the ground as the remaining stems will send up new sprouts and branches. A weevil found feeding on the vine in its native range in Asia has been tested as a biological control agent in northeastern North America. Large infestations should first be treated with a pre-emergent herbicide application. When applied to the ground shortly before seeds begin to germinate, they prevent the new germinant from growing and emerging from the soil. Application should occur by mid-March in southern Indiana, depending on weather patterns. Pre-emergent herbicide treatments should be followed with a post-emergent herbicide application in later spring to early summer to control the vine missed or not otherwise killed by the pre-emergent herbicide application.

Excerpts taken from Purdue Extension, ISCIM, FNR-481-W

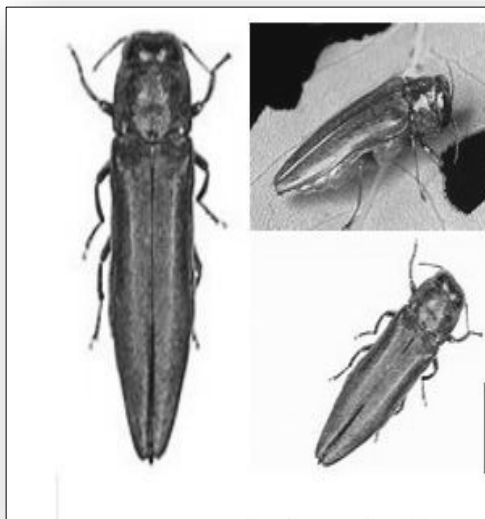
CRP Information and EAB

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides technical and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides assistance to farmers and ranchers in complying with Federal, State, and Tribal environmental laws, and encourages environmental enhancement. The program is funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). CRP is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) with NRCS providing technical land eligibility determinations, conservation planning and practice implementation.



The Conservation Reserve Program reduces soil erosion, protects the Nation's ability to produce food and fiber, reduces sedimentation in streams and lakes, improves water quality, establishes wildlife habitat, and enhances forest and wetland resources. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover; such as native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filter strips or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract. Cost sharing is provided to establish the vegetative cover practices.

Land conservation practices include enhancing organic matter, avoiding excessive tillage, managing pests, and nutrients efficiently, preventing soil compaction, keeping the ground covered, and diversifying cropping systems. Choosing specific practices within each component depends on the situation since different types of soil respond differently to the same practice. Each combination of soil type and land use calls for a different set of practices to enhance quality. Water Quality practices are issues are sediment, nutrients, pesticides, pathogens, and in some parts of the country, salinity. Conservation practices to improve land in an environmentally sound manner will result in better water quality for drinking, recreation, wildlife, fisheries, and industry.



Agrilus Planipennis, commonly known as the Emerald Ash Borer, is a green jewel beetle native to northeastern Asia that feeds on ash species. Females lay eggs in bark crevices on ash trees, and larvae feed underneath the bark of ash trees to emerge as adults in one to two years. In its native range, it is typically found at low densities and does not cause significant damage to trees native to the area. Outside its native range, it is an invasive species and is highly destructive to ash trees native to northwest Europe and North America. Prior to being found in North America, very little was known about the emerald ash borer in its native range. This has resulted in much of the research on its biology being focused in North America. Local US governments are attempting to control it by monitoring its spread, diversifying tree species, insecticides, and biological controls.

Grazing Bites by Victor Shelton



It wasn't too long ago that you were hearing that some parts of the state were actually still in drought status. I believe it is safe to say, without even looking it up, that that is no longer a problem. Instead, completely thawed and very soggy ground is prevalent.

It's been a few years since I've seen this wet of an early spring. In fact, maybe about twenty years. We are quite often still blessed with some free "concrete" this time of year. As much as I like the warmer days right now, I probably wouldn't turn down some frozen ground to reduce mud and the impact of very saturated ground. One guy told me that if it were just a hair warmer, he might go barefoot since he was tired of getting his boots stuck in the mud.

If you are not prepared for such wet weather, then it can be quite frustrating. Mud is certainly worse around feeding, watering and other concentrated areas. One of the best solutions for these concentrated areas is to install a conservation practice called a Heavy Use Area Protection (HUAP); e.g., feed and watering pads. HUAPs are fairly simple to construct and better yet, very economical. Retire NRCS technician Mary Lee Smith recently noted that HUAPs were the best thing sliced bread: just a fantastic practice!

You start by leveling the area to remove excess organic matter and manure, and also top soil if necessary to get a firm foundation to build on. Geo-tile fabric is the first layer, then crushed limestone, which is usually #53s and applied 6 to 8 inches deep depending on the site and conditions. Follow by topping with a couple inches of lime. The lime makes it easier to scrape and or clean later and a little lime spread out on the field or pasture certainly would hurt anything. The lime actually packs down very well when it's dry. Tractor tires or hooves can also do a good job of packing while still under dry conditions, so it's best to build during the summer, long before you would need it.

These pads supply a firm well-drained area for feeding hay in rings, silage in bunkers, and for areas around watering tanks and existing feed bunks. Similar designs can also be used for concentrated walking area and lanes. If you happen to be on softer or consistently wet soil, then a layer of #2 lime stone may be needed underneath for a firmer base over the geo-textile fabric. HUAPs are available for cost-share through some NRCS and conservation district programs. Contact your local USDA field office for more information.

Due to drier conditions in parts of Indiana last August and September, stockpiled forage, additional hay cuttings, and fall annuals were just not what they should have been. This lack of sufficient growth reduced fall and early winter grazing days and root growth. That growth is important because it not only provides some valuable forage to graze, but good top growth means good root growth. The combination of the two is stabilizing when grazed under wetter conditions. The less growth present above and below the ground, the more potential damage to a field when livestock are present.

Truthfully, once the frost layer breaks through and conditions are wet like they are right now, you are usually better off having animals off the pasture and in a sacrifice area; especially if you are working with soil with fragipans. Soils with fragipans (a thin and very heavy layer of pure clay) tend to hold the water more at the surface level, keeping the top layer very wet and more likely to be damaged by livestock. It is better to sacrifice a small area than a whole field that might require totally replanting afterwards.

I have seen some poorly chosen sites utilized for sacrifice areas that have been left in a horrible disturbed condition. When areas; such as creek bottoms, woods, and erodible sloping ground are used as a sacrifice area, water quality is almost always adversely affected. Try to choose a stable site and any water bodies. Sometimes, these sacrifice areas can be paddock(s) that you plan to renovate anyway. Ideally, plant a cover-crop; such as oats, sorghum-sudan or millet on the area after excess manure is collected and spread appropriately where needed. These areas can then be grazed later in the year.

In southern part of Indiana, we are getting some early green growth already. This is certainly a delightful attraction for grazing livestock and also for producers who are already running short on hay. It is every so tempting to just open the gates and let them have at it. Keep in mind, most pastures are under a little more pressure than usual due to the lack of normal growth last fall. They really need some extra rest prior to turnout this year.

(For pasture information and past issues of Grazing Bits—<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/in/technical/landuse/pasture>)



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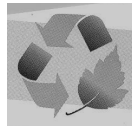
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Rental Equipment Available at Dubois County SWCD

- **No-Till Drill**
Great Plains No-Till drill has a seeding width of 7 feet, and can be used to plant soybeans, wheat, legumes, grasses, etc. It can also be used to plant native, or warm season, grasses. *Rental fee is \$8/acre or minimum of \$50.*
- **Stapler/Staples**
Installing erosion control blankets? This stapler makes completing the job easy! The plunger simply pushes the staples into the ground. *Rental fee is \$10/use and box of 1,000 staples is \$50 per box.*
- **Spinning Jenny**
Use to install high-tensile wire fences. Load with wire and set on the ground. Walk away pulling the end of the wire and it will spin, preventing your wire from tangling. Slow down gradually before stopping to prevent over-spinning and tangling. Can also be used to rewind wire in the field. *No Rental Fees.*
- **Tile Flags**
Flags on 36" wire staff can be used to mark underground power lines, or surveying jobs. *Cost is \$7.00/bundle of 100.*