



2022 annual report **DUBOIS COUNTY** **SOIL & WATER** **CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

2022 Soil & Water Conservation Achievements

Judi Brown, Executive Director

The 77th year of serving Dubois County landowners is in the books! The Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has completed another year of successfully accomplishing our conservation goals.

Throughout 2022, we still felt the effects of the pandemic. As a result, our Annual Meeting early in the year was a “hybrid” meeting. We were in person at the Ferdinand Community Center but used Zoom technology to allow people to join us from the safety of their homes. While there are benefits to meeting in person, we’ve learned that a bonus of virtual meetings and trainings is the cost savings of not having to travel to other parts of the state. It also allows us the opportunity to have speakers from anywhere across the country speaking from their own home or office. In 2022, the SWCD worked with the Indiana Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative staff to plan a virtual workshop series for Agriculture Lenders.

German American Bank staff will be the pilot group for this series, which will then be available to others across the state.

A 2022 achievement for the Soil and Water Conservation District was our purchase of a Great Plains No-till Seeder. The seeder is available for landowners to rent. It is lighter than a traditional no-till drill and allows more flexibility to re-seed pastures and smaller areas. It is equipped with a main and small seed box. To get good seed to soil contact, the area to be planted should not have a lot of residue or other growing plants. Duane Hopf, SWCD Associate Supervisor, demonstrated how to use the seeder for the staff, so they are available to answer questions about its use. More information about the seeder, and all SWCD equipment, is available on the SWCD webpage: www.duboisswcd.org.

Moving out of the pandemic meant that the SWCD moved back to more traditional, in-person events.

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2022 SWCD Achievements

(Continued from page 1)

The office was once again fully staffed, and staff was seen at display booths around the county, and they also participated in many field events, workshops, and classroom presentations. The SWCD office is housed in the USDA Service Center, in Jasper. Space is shared between federal, state, and county staff, all working together for common goals of natural resource conservation.

The SWCD staff are largely funded by Dubois County Government, and are Judi Brown, Executive Director, Jessica Condra, Administrative Assistant, Justin Bary, Resource Specialist, and Melissa Ruschau, Resource Specialist. All four staff members have specific roles and provide service to the county landowners in different manners. The final SWCD staff member is Emily Finch, Invasive Species Specialist, funded through a Clean Water Indiana grant. The federal presence is the USDA Natural Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist. In 2022, the District Conservationists were “acting”, as Dubois County does not have a full-time Conservationist stationed in the office. Early in 2022, Larencia Williams served the county customers, and when her detail ended, Samantha Dame stepped in and covered the end of 2022. The SWCD is looking forward to welcoming a new District Conservationist in 2023. In the meantime, Pike County District Conservationist Emily Kelly, as well as Samantha Dame will have weekly office hours. Their hours will vary; call the office to schedule an appointment. Rounding out the conservation staff is Andrea Gogel, Resource Specialist with the Indiana

State Department of Agriculture. 2022 also saw the completion of the Lower East Fork White River grant project, completed by Julie Loehr, Watershed Specialist.

The Dubois County SWCD is a subdivision of Indiana state government and plays a role in the Indiana Conservation Partnership, eight Indiana agencies and organizations who share a common goal of promoting conservation. To fulfill its role, the Dubois County SWCD partners with local government agencies, citizens' groups, and individuals. SWCD leadership is provided by a board of five residents



Adjusting to new normal, the 2022 SWCD annual meeting was hybrid, offering both in person and virtual attendance.

called Supervisors. In 2022, the Supervisors were Brenda Sermersheim, Glenn Goeppner, Pat Eckerle, and Andy Helming. Glenn Menke's term as Supervisor ended, and Arlene Fleck joined the board of Supervisors early in 2022. Brenda Sermersheim served as Chair of the SWCD Supervisors, and Glenn Goeppner as Vice Chair.

Our landowners are our partners in conservation success! The conservation practices constructed on the land by the landowners decrease soil erosion, improve water quality, and improve the soil health on the acres involved. Other benefits of these improvements are the addition of cash flow to the local economy through the hiring of contractors and the purchase of materials. At the end of the day, these improvements will improve the farmland, help provide food and fiber for county residents, and through the taxes paid by the landowner, help the bottom line for the governmental entities in Dubois County.

The SWCD serves as a primary source of conservation information for the residents of Dubois County, through technical and financial assistance, as well as passing conservation information on to the landowners. The financial assistance comes via grants written by SWCD staff, or through the USDA Farm Bill programs. While there are never enough funds available to meet the conservation needs, having a fully staffed office allows the SWCD to offer high quality programming and assistance to the public. One major outreach method utilized by the SWCD office is the VUJC Land Stewardship Initiative (LSI). We use innovative practices on the crop land, and in fall of 2022 hosted a field event to look at the effect of the cover crop biomass on the soil.

Another major source of assistance to the community is through the SWCD Invasive Species Specialist, Emily



The Dubois County SWCD focused on Noxious Weed education during the 2022 4-H Fair.

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Finch. Emily provides technical assistance and advice to landowners in their battles against invasive species such as multi-flora rose, bush honeysuckle, and poison hemlock. Emily leads the local Cooperative Weed Management Area, called the Invasive Species Awareness Coalition of Dubois County, or ISAC. ISAC is a citizens group that meets bi-monthly and develops outreach programming for the county residents. ISAC is open to all residents! Check the SWCD webpage at www.duboisswcd.org for more information.

ISAC events in 2022 included a spring presentation at VUJC called Landscape Worthy Natives, as well as a summer prairie walk at the Parklands in Jasper, and an invasive species training session in conjunction with Southern Indiana Purdue Agricultural Ag Center. Other events completed by ISAC included a weed wrangle, and two workdays, one in

Huntingburg and one in Ferdinand. Emily also works in conjunction with the Dubois County Weed Board and led a public awareness campaign about Poison Hemlock early in 2022.

As always for the past 77 years, conservation practices were accomplished by landowners throughout the county, assisted by the Conservation Partnership staff. These conservation practices were accomplished through the Jasper USDA Service Center, utilizing a variety of funding sources:

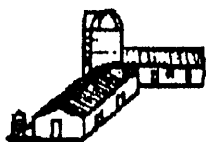
- Brush Management - 102.7 acres
- Brush Management to Improve Wildlife Habitat - 124.7 acres
- Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan - 1 (number)
- Cover Crops - 1,088.99 acres
- CRP Status Review/Re-enroll Checks - 113 Practices
- Critical Area Planting - 1.4 acre
- Filter Strips - 6.02 acres

(Continued on page 4)



Resource Specialist Melissa Ruschau engages with 3rd grade students at Northeast Dubois.

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2022 SWCD Achievements

(Continued from page 3)

Forest Management Plan - 6 (number)
Forest (timber) Stand Improvement - 99.0 acres
Grassed Waterways - 6.0 acre
Grassland Conservation Initiative - 213.6 acres
Heavy Use Area Protection - 3,200 sq ft
Introduced Grasses and Legumes - 41.3 acres
Pest Management - 84.5 acres
Prescribed Grazing - 16.8 acres
Livestock Watering Facility - 1 (number)
Livestock Pipeline - 760 feet
Native Grass Establishment - 2.5 acres
Nutrient Management - 144.1 acres
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till - 5.3 acres
SWPPP Reviews (stormwater plans) - 3 (number)
Stormwater Site Visits - 34 (number)
Underground Outlet, and Tiling - 1,424 feet
Water and Sediment Control Basins - 12 (number)

The SWCD staff and Supervisors are visible within the community, planning, hosting, and participating in a variety of events to provide information and technical advice to county landowners.

Events Hosted, Assisted With, and Participated in:

Annual Dubois County Tillage Transect
Career Cruise, Jasper High School
Dubois County 4-H Project Judging
Dubois County 4-H Fair Display
Duck Race and Old Jasper Day Water Quality Info Booth
Envirothon, Regional and State
Ferdinand Folk Fest
Forestry Committee Fire Management Tour
Forestry Committee Fall Field Day
Home School Education Program at Jasper Library
Invasive Species Landowner Workshop
ISAC Prairie Walk
ISAC Weed Wrangles, Workdays
Jasper Home Expo
LSI Fall Soil Health Workshop
Memorial Hospital Earth Day Event
Patoka Lake Clean Up Day
Purdue Extension Food & Ag Day
Southwest Indiana Soil Health Expo
Southern Indiana Purdue Ag Center Forestry Short Course
Southern Indiana Purdue Ag Center Forestry Training
SW Indiana Agriculture Economic Summit

Tri-County Greener Pastures Field Day

Other SWCD Projects and Programs:

The SWCD provides a no-till drill, erosion control blanket staplers, hand seeder, tile flags, and spinning jenny, at minimal or no cost to landowners for conservation uses.

Staff and Supervisors maintain contact with national, state, and local elected officials by attending and hosting events, including legislative breakfasts. In 2022, the SWCD hosted an Open House for County Officials.

The Urban/Small Farm Program has developed since the Pandemic. The SWCD is working with Purdue Extension, Indiana Association of Conservation Districts, and NRCS staff to begin programming in Dubois County.

SWCD Supervisors and Staff participate in training opportunities to allow them to operate at their full potential.

Training and meetings attended:

Annual conference of Indiana Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Conservation Webinars, virtual IASWCD and IDEA Region Meetings, virtual and in-person
IDEA Fall Conference
Required County, Federal training sessions
Stormwater Pollution Prevention Control Training

Soil Health Trainings
Organizations supported:
Dubois County Ag Advisory Board
Dubois County Weed Board
Four Rivers Forestry Committee
Indiana District Employee Association
Indiana Forest and Woodland Owners Association
Invasive Species Awareness Coalition of Dubois County
Jasper Stormwater Board
Lincoln Hills Forestry Committee
Lower East Fork White Watershed Committee

Patoka 2000, Jasper Chamber of Commerce
Patoka Lake Watershed Steering Committee
NRCS Southwest Soil Health Team
Rotary Club of Dubois County
Preparations for the next year typically begin at the end of the year. In 2022, the SWCD received a new Clean Water Indiana



Executive Director Judi Brown leads 4th graders from across the county in a pollinator exercise during Food & Ag day held at the Dubois County 4-H Fairgrounds

grant in Conjunction with the Orange and Washington County SWCDs. This grant begins in 2023 and includes cost-share funds to be used for livestock related practices, as well as invasive species and noxious weed control.

In the waning days of 2022, SWCD Ex-

ecutive Director Judi Brown announced that after 25 years, she is retiring and moving on to a new venture. The SWCD is conducting a search for a new Executive Director to continue to move the SWCD forward and offer conservation assistance to the residents of Dubois County.

FSA Dates to Remember

As we start the journey into a new year, we wanted to remind everyone of some important deadline dates, for the Farm Service Agency (FSA), in 2023:

March 15 - 2023 ARC-PLC Election and Enrollment Deadline

May 31 - Final Date to Obtain Loans or Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP's) on 2022 Harvested Feed Grains and Soybeans

June 20 - Final Date to Submit a Prevented Planting Claim for Corn

July 5 - Final Date to Submit a Prevented Planting Claim for Soybeans

July 15 - Final Acreage Reporting Date for All Other Crops

Ongoing - Signup for Continuous CRP

Ongoing - Submit an Application for a Farm Storage Facility Loan

Continuous - Submit an Application for FSA Farm Loans

Continuous - Signup for FSA Text Alerts - Text INDubois to FSANOW (372-669)

Continuous - Sign up for GovDelivery Newsletters, Bulletins and Indiana Press Releases

If you have any questions about the above listed deadlines, or are curious about your program involvement, please contact the FSA office for additional information - 812-482-5565 extension 2.

We look forward to working with you in 2023 - FSA



Invasive Specialist Emily Finch discusses native alternatives to invasive plants during the Landscape Natives event held at the Vincennes University Jasper Campus CTIM building.

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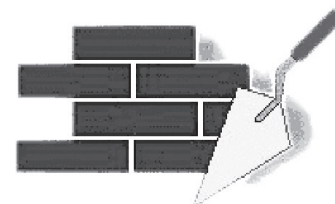
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Duane Hopf receives Local & State Conservation Awards

On Tuesday, February 1, 2022, Duane Hopf was presented with the Dubois County SWCD Friend of Conservation Award during the 76th Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Annual Meeting held at the Ferdinand Community Center Möbel Room.

Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) recognizes a corporate, nonprofit/government, and individual that have made an outstanding contribution to soil and water conservation in Indiana with the Friend of Conservation Award. This year the Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District nominated Duane Hopf from Mill Creek Farms for the individual category, and it came as no surprise to those who know Hopf that he won! The award was presented on January 25, 2022 at the Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts Annual Conference in Indianapolis.

Hopf is a fourth-generation farmer who has been farming full time since high school. Mill Creek Farms is a family operation that farms over 3,600 acres in Dubois & Pike counties. They grow an array of crops and raise beef cattle on the rougher acres. Hopf's farming operation incorporates new technologies such as GPS based soil testing to create a prescription tailor-made for each field alongside tried-and-true methods of planting green, cover crops and no-till practices. In his 36 years of farming, he has seen many challenging weather events and believes that we are better able to prevent additional hardships with the

use of conservation practices.

Hopf said "I have always felt the need to improve the world we live in. In farming we rely on our natural resources to make a living, so preserving and enhancing it makes sense." He has supported the SWCD for over 32 years, as a Supervisor 1989-2000 and Associate Supervisor 2001-present. His leadership "behind the scenes" has helped to build staff efficacy in assisting the landowners of Dubois County with implementation of the no-till drill rental offered at the SWCD. His insight has been instrumental over the years in helping to establish the Vincennes University Jasper Campus (VUJC) Land Stewardship Initiative (LSI) which is hosted by the Vincennes University Jasper Campus. The LSI is a 40-acre educational farm where you can see the conservation practices in action and learn how they can be implemented on your property, no matter the size.

When asked what advice he would give to individuals wanting to try out a new practice, Hopf said to test a small section first, and analyze it to see if it fits into your future plans. Take a 10-acre field and divide it in half with 5 acres farmed as you have always farmed and five acres where you implement the change. See what happens before you make the investment. Start slow and pick a path to explore. "Surround yourself with good people, be passionate about what you do, do your own testing, give back to the community" says Hopf.

Duane Hopf, championing conservation in Dubois County!



Dubois SWCD Board Chair Brenda Sermersheim presents Duane Hopf with the Friend of Conservation Award.

Johanneman Presented OFS Forest Steward Award



Consultant forester Doug Brown presents Jim Johanneman with the OFS Forest Steward Award at the Dubois SWCD's 2022 annual meeting.

Dubois County contains many acres of highly erodible land; steep ground for which the best use is tree cover. Improperly managed forest ground reduces forest yield, causes soil erosion and impacts local water quality. The Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) annually recognizes a forest landowner who carries out wise forest stewardship programs on their land.

This year, the SWCD along with sponsor OFS presented Jim Johanneman the OFS Forest Steward Award. The award was presented by consultant forester Doug Brown at the 76th annual SWCD meeting held Tuesday, February 1st at the Ferdinand Community Center Möbel Room.

The Johanneman family has farmed their Ferdinand land since 1854 and in 2013 received the Hoosier Homestead Sesquicentennial Award. 40-acres of the farm is forested, and the remaining fields are in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) planted with warm season grasses.

Johanneman retired from teaching at Forest Park in 2005 and as he put it "nature was calling him." Once in retirement you would be hard pressed not to find him managing the land, a love of which has only increased as he spends more time outdoors.

His father instilled in him a love of nature at an early age. Johanneman remembers him just standing in the woods and looking up at the massive tulip poplar trees,

taking in the beauty. Johanneman expects that he has planted 300-400 trees on the land, many of which are tulip poplar. In addition to direct planting, he likes to let nature take its course, allowing seeds to take root as he removes competing plants.

Over the years Johanneman has done some selective harvesting in the woods. To keep vines under control he did a Timber Stand Improvement (TSI). In 2021 he completed a significant harvest and used a professional forester to mark the sale with a thinning and improvement cut, and one area needing a regenerative cut. While these practices may not be aesthetically pleasing at first, Johanneman knew that they were what was needed and looks forward to helping his forest grow. His work and desire to do the right thing for his woods are what makes him an excellent forest steward.

If you are interested in becoming a better forestland owner, Johanneman recommends that you attend a workshop to first learn about the ecosystem of your land or contact a forester. Find out what needs your attention and do a little work at a time. If we take care of our land then the land will take care of us.

What's next for Johanneman? He is looking into putting his land into their classified forest program and hopes that his sons will continue on the family tradition as forest stewards.

Lower East Fork White River watershed news

Pike County Soil and Water Conservation District is pleased to announce that another round of implementation dollars has been awarded for the Lower East Fork White River!

Critical subwatersheds targeted will be Mud Creek in Pike County, Aikman Creek in Daviess County, and Birch Creek in Dubois County.

There is a delay in the start of the grant, due to EPA and IDEM fiscal year funding dates, but it is expected that we should have a signed contract to start the grant in fall of 2023. Keep watching the Soil and Water districts newsletters and Facebook pages for the official kickoff announcement. A stakeholder meeting will be planned once the grant is officially started, and the cost-share program guidelines will be determined at that stakeholder meeting.

Until then, if you have any questions about the Lower East Fork White Watershed, you can also reach Julie Loehr at julia.loehr@in.nacdnet.net.



Resource Specialist Melissa Ruschau presents aquatic information to Dubois County FFA Students during the regional Envirothon contest.



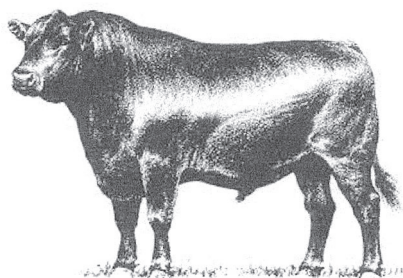
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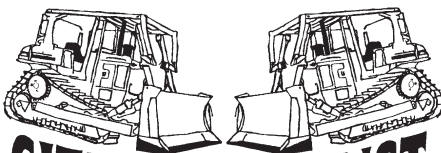
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Invasive Species Annual Report 2022 - Dubois County

Prepared by Emily Finch

This was year two of the joint 2021-2023 Clean Water Indiana (CWI) grant between the Dubois, Daviess, and Martin County Soil & Water Conservation Districts, which funds the Invasive Species Specialist position. During the year, the project built on 2021 efforts mapping Poison Hemlock and other invasives along county roadways. In Martin County, the Invasive Specialist partnered with a forester on Crane Naval base to survey their roadways, which were left out in 2021, and was pleasantly surprised to find NO Poison Hemlock on base. While no survey work was done in Daviess and Dubois counties in 2022, the project did use the data collected previously to guide education and outreach activities across all three counties, particularly on Poison Hemlock and Wild Parsnip (a related invasive plant whose sap can cause severe skin burns).

The Invasive Specialist started 2022 by working with the Dubois County Weed Board to develop a comprehensive Poison Hemlock outreach campaign. An article on Poison hemlock was published in various newsletters (Dubois SWCD, Dubois REC, and Perry-Spencer Communications), and shared with local news media across the three counties. A shorter noxious weed alert was created highlighting Poison Hemlock and

Johnson grass, and Dubois County included this handout in their spring property tax mailings.

The Invasive Specialist also wrote multiple public service announcements about Poison Hemlock, which the Weed Board worked with WBDC to record and air on local radio. Several online advertising images were created, along with educational displays for events and a powerpoint presentation.

Since Wild Parsnip was also prevalent during roadside surveys in Daviess and Martin counties, the Invasive Specialist created an educational display to compare the two plants and used it at several spring and summer events across the two counties. The outreach campaign gained such traction that the Invasive Specialist received calls and emails from several other counties in Indiana. To help other SWCDs in their own outreach, the materials created were added to an online folder to be shared.

Landowner technical assistance for invasive species also continued in 2022 with a total of 41 landowners receiving assistance, 12 of which received site visits from the Invasive Specialist, and 9 of which received written invasive management plans (some additional plans are still pending from 2022 site visits). About half of that assistance was in Dubois County where the Invasive Specialist assisted



Volunteers once again helped remove garlic mustard at Ferdinand State Forest in April 2022.

21 landowners, conducted 8 site visits, and wrote 5 management plans.

The two Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs) the Invasive Species Specialist coordinates also had successful education and outreach programs in 2022. In Dubois County the Invasive Species Awareness Coalition (ISAC) finished spending funds from a 2021 Dubois REC grant project to purchase two new vinyl banners and host the Landscape Worthy Natives event with guest speakers and authors Sally and Harmon Weeks. This event, which had originally been planned for the spring of 2020, was a great success with 54 people in attendance. WTJS was even able to record the presentation which later aired on local TV and is posted on YouTube.

In the summer, ISAC held their first event at the Jasper Parklands, a Prairie Walk which drew a massive crowd of 42 attendees. Plans are already being made to host this event again in 2023, and to explore other options for events or trainings focused on the Parklands Prairie. In fall, ISAC helped to host the third annual Landowner Invasive Control Training with Purdue Extension, and members also participated in a fundraising workday with a private

forestry contractor to raise money for ISAC's 2023 activities.

In total, the Invasive Species grant project supported 24 events in 2022 across the three counties. These events were attended by 487 people, and reached an estimated 2,746 more through educational booths at public events. CISMA members contributed a total of 254 hours of their time volunteering at these events, or 438 hours when CISMA planning meetings are included. Of these events, 11 took place in Dubois County, attended by 218 people and reaching an estimated 1,196 more.

The year ended with a new outreach project that will be carried into 2023, highlighting cut-stump herbicide as an effective control measure for invasive woody vegetation. A 3D display was created, along with a new handout that will be distributed more in the coming year. While 2023 will be the last year of this grant funded project, the Dubois SWCD is looking into ways that they can continue to support the Invasive Species Specialist position. In the meantime, we encourage anyone that has questions about invasive species to contact Emily Finch at Emily.Finch@in.nacndet.net, 812-482-1171 x3. Finch is available to answer landowner questions, conduct free site visits, participate in events, and give educational presentations on a variety of invasive species topics.



Will Drews was one of two guest experts that led our first ever Prairie Walk at the Jasper Parklands in summer 2022.



LSI report



by *Melissa Ruschau*

Many different things happened on the Land Stewardship Initiative (LSI) farm on Vincennes University Jasper Campus (VUJC) this year. It started with the planting of a new mixture of cover crops in the fall of 2021. The five-way mix included Oats, Barley, Crimson Clover, Rape and Winter Peas. It was a colorful lush mix to plant into in spring 2022. Once again, the choice was made to plant green (planting into live growing stand of plants) into the fall cover crops.

However, this year not all the acres of the LSI cropland were planted with corn. The LSI Ag Committee noticed that due to global demand and lack of supply, fertilizer prices had doubled since 2021 and herbicide had almost quadrupled in price for 2022. The team decided that 2022 would be a good year to focus on planting corn in high yielding acres where success had been seen in past years and amend the lower yielding acres. Field 1 and approximately half of Field 2 were planted with corn, while the other half of Field 2, Fields 5, 6, and 7 were instead planted with cover crops.

The cover crops used included a variety of different mixes. Sorghum Sudan grass, Sunhemp, Peredovic Sunflowers, Buckwheat and Pearl Millet were drilled into fields 2 and 7. Field 5 received a mix that was primarily Sunflowers. Field 6 received a similar mix to

field 7 without Sorghum Sudan but with Cow peas added. This cover crop planting had a variety of benefits on the lower yielding fields including decreasing erosion and allowing the roots to mine and capturing nutrients from deep within the soil. As an added benefit, as the roots break down they will create pores for increased water infiltration and will increase organic matter within the soil.

By early fall, Sunhemp was in full continuous bloom and nine foot tall Sorghum dominated the landscape with its height. The summer cover crops created quite a bit of biomass and in fall a cover crop of Cereal Rye was planted in late September.

This "living land lab" created quite a few opportunities for dialogue with local landowners. Farmers see what is happening and growing on the Vincennes University Jasper Campus (VUJC), and often stop by the district office with their questions. Conversations included discussing French Drains, summer cover crops, nutrient management, and inter-seeding cover crops into growing corn, all stemming from LSI fields.

Several small groups toured the property in 2022. A Girl Scout Troop toured and tested soil structure and infiltration this fall as part of their 'Sow What' Journey (a requirement before pursuing their individual Gold Award Projects). In addition, a Fall Field day was held on the property. NRCS and SWCD staff demonstrated hands-on soil tests, a compared the soil in the no-till fields versus the tilled control strip, discussed managing cover crop biomass, and reviewed the history of conservation practices implemented on the crop fields.

In 2022, Ruschau saw a doubling of numbers of landowners requesting site visits for technical assistance and soil health assessments compared to the 2021 numbers. She also had additional requests for soil health demonstrations and aquatic presentations for local events and classroom sessions.

If you would like to learn more about the LSI, request a site visit, or classroom presentation - contact Melissa Ruschau at 812-482-1171 ext 3 or email melissa.ruschau@in.nacdn.net.

NRCS Southwest Indiana Soil Scientist Travis Gogel show soil structure and compaction layers during the LSI fall field day.



Cover Crops planted in fall of 2021 blooming in the spring of 2022.



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Photo by Emily Finch (Dubois SWCD)

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Judi Brown
Executive Director



Justin Bary
Resource Specialist



Melissa Ruschau
Resource Specialist



Jessica Condra
Admin. Assist.

Partnership Staff



Emily Finch
Invasive Species Specialist



Emily Kelly
Acting District Conservationist
USDA NRCS



Andrea Gogel
ISDA
Resource Specialist

A 25-Year Career, By the Numbers

By Judi Brown

9,131. That's how many days were in the past 25 years. That's how many days since Judi Brown began her career with the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District on January 1, 1998. The days are quickly dwindling on that career, as she retires on January 31st.

As with so many other professions, a career in conservation doesn't mean 5 "9 to 5" workdays each week. A career in conservation is measured by the numbers. Numbers of visits to a field or forest. Numbers of acres protected. Tons of soil saved. Numbers of people impacted. Number of grants written and accomplished. Number of partnerships forged, and networks built.

42. There have been 42 Supervisors of the SWCD since its founding in 1945. 19. There have been 19 SWCD Supervisors during the past 25 years. Under the leadership of Director Judi Brown, the SWCD staff and 19 Supervisors have stood upon the shoulders of the good staff and Supervisors who came before and built the SWCD into what it is today.

5. There are 5 full-time employees working for the Dubois County SWCD. 25 years ago, there was 1. Prior to that, there was 1 employee, working part-time. The 5 SWCD Supervisors in 1998 saw the need for full-time staff, so they worked with the 3 County Commissioners and 7 County Council members to make that happen. Since then, Judi Brown has worked with the Supervisors and County Officials to increase the staff to 5. During the past 25 years, the SWCD has had 8 interns, 6 positions funded by grants, and 8 former employees who left the SWCD for other positions or retirement. 6 of the former interns and employees are still working in the conservation field today, after receiving their foundation from the Dubois County SWCD and Judi Brown.

6. There have been 6 strategic plans written for the SWCD since 1998 to help achieve the Supervisors' goals. The plans include 14 different resource and operations concerns, some of which are being addressed in the current plan of work. Hundreds of methods to achieve the SWCD goals have been employed over the past 25 years. They include utilizing grant funds for technical staff and cost share to assist with implementation of conservation practices, outreach to landowners, including field

days, tours, workshops, and displays at events, and developing and implementing innovative outreach tools to promote soil health.

873,876. \$873,876.00 put to work in Dubois County, due to grant applications written and administered by Judi Brown since 1998. Several more applications were submitted but did not receive funding. The grant funds have been and are still utilized as cost share for putting conservation practices to work on the ground, purchasing a seeder for landowners to use, matching funds for other grant funded projects, and purchasing equipment for the staff to use to make them more efficient in serving the landowners.

1. 1 pandemic to challenge SWCD day-to-day operations. Everyone remembers how it affected their lives; effects that are still being seen to this day. Staff members had to telework, and the use of the Zoom and Teams platforms became common place for staff meetings. The technology used during the Covid pandemic is still in use today even though staff are back in their offices. Zoom meetings replace in-person meetings to discuss projects and initiatives, eliminating the need for 6 hours of travel time for a 3-hour meeting in Indianapolis. Today's use of computers is a far cry from what appeared on a typical office desk 25 years ago. Typewriters, onion skin paper, carbon paper, office telephones, adding machines, engineer's rulers, and mechanical pencils were the tools of choice. Overhead and slide projectors and facsimile machines were cutting edge technology for a while, as were floppy discs and rewritable CDs...and cell phones. 2 SWCD technical staff members used walkie talkies to communicate in the field, back in the day.

Time spent travelling to meetings. There have been meetings. Lots and lots of meetings. There have been project planning meetings, SWCD meetings, locally led meetings, shop meetings, strategic planning sessions, County Council meetings, committee meetings, brainstorming meetings, training sessions, project roll out meetings, and on and on since 1998. Networking happens and partnerships are built at meetings. Ideas are born and implemented at meetings. Not all meetings are between 9 and

(Continued on page 11)

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SOIL HEALTH...
the root of everything



Judi Brown

(Continued from page 10)

5, and not all on weekdays. They are vital to the success and growth of an Executive Director's career, and to the growth of the SWCD.

25 years of projects and programs to accomplish the goals in the SWCD strategic plans takes many shapes and forms.

Judi Brown researched and implemented a Dubois County Soil Judging Invitational, the first one taking place in 2000. 17 Soil Judging contests have taken place since then. 1 current SWCD staff member recalls attending the contests as a high school student. 1 student who participated in the SWCD's Youth Board now teaches agriculture in Dubois County and she and 2 others who attended the soil judging contests as students are local ag teachers.

Other programs and events include 25 SWCD annual meetings, 25 annual reports, 24 displays at the local 4-H Fair, and presentations for scout troops,

civic groups, and school classrooms. Judi planned and led annual Make a Splash with Water days at Precious Blood and Southridge Middle Schools.

There have been field days, shop meetings, and informational breakfasts, with Judi donning an apron and cooking biscuits and gravy at 1. Water quality education takes place at stream clean up events and the annual Patoka 2000 Duck Race.

Press releases to the local radio stations and newspapers have led to an active presence on social media, a webpage, and interviews on the local TV station.

More recent initiatives developed include the VUJC Land Stewardship Initiative, and the implementation of an invasive species program, including hiring an Invasive Species Specialist.

Since the pandemic, locally grown items and small farms has become a new focus for the SWCD and the conservation partnership in Indiana.

Luckily, despite many trips to creeks, rivers and lakes for water quality monitoring and creek sweeps, there

has been only 1 splash down. This big splash followed a slip into a soil pit filled with cold, cold rainwater, in 2021. Judi and the farm dog who witnessed the slip into the pit and then the slippery climb out agreed never to discuss it with anyone. And 25 years of projects rolls by in the blink of an eye.

Mentors. Too many to count over 25 years. Co-workers and Supervisors who became friends. Sadly, funerals for some of them. A network of people in conservation who guide and advise, and some who share lunch and offer a shoulder when things get tough. Dreams dreamt, and ideas put on paper. Some succeed, and some do not. Lessons are learned from mistakes made, and the program improves. You jump out of the soil pit, dust yourself off (or dry yourself off...) and the conservation work continues.

The last numbers. 1-31-2023. A new beginning for the SWCD with a new Director to guide continued service to the public, and conservation on the land.

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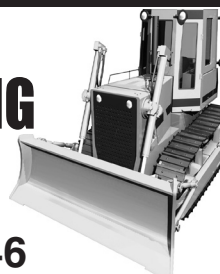
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Two Local Farms Receive River Friendly Farmer Award



River Friendly Farmer Award winner is pictured with Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, Daryl Auffart and Don Villwock, former Indiana Farm Bureau President.

The annual River Friendly Farmer Award recognizes farmers for their implementation of conservation practices, like no-till and cover crops, which ultimately protect waterways and improve water quality in Indiana. Indiana's lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands are valuable natural resources.

This year both Daryl Auffart and Scott Balsmeyer of Balsy Haven LLC were recognized at River Friendly Farmers of Dubois County.

Auffart farms in the Patoka watershed (Hunley & Indiana Creek) where he produces corn, soybean, wheat, and alfalfa utilizing no-till, cover crops, grid soil sampling and variable rate fertilizer applications. Soil conservation and improving water quality and pollinator habitats are important to Auffart as he intends to leave the land better than he found it for the next generation. Some of the conservation management practices he utilizes include CRP filter strips, grassed waterways, Water and Sediment Control Basins (WASCOBs), drainage tile, pipe drop structures, rock chutes, and surface inlets. He also utilizes a com-

prehensive nutrient management plan. Over the years, Auffart and his family have been involved in 4-H, FFA, Farm Bureau, and are members of Christ the King Catholic Church. Auffart is a 4th generation farmer and enjoys sharing farming and conservation strategies with his friends and neighbors.

Balsmeyer farms in the Patoka and Lower Ohio-Little Pigeon watershed where he produces corn and soybeans utilizing no-till and cover crops. He has constructed a large number of WASCOBs throughout his property as well as drainage tiles, rock chutes, surface inlets, CRP field borders, filter strips and grassed waterways. These practices have greatly reduced sediment and nutrient runoff. Balsmeyer encourages all landowners to take advantage of conservation programs available to them.

By keeping soil erosion to a minimum, Auffart and Balsmeyer are able to keep more nutrients and sediment on their land and out of the watershed.

Congratulations to the Auffart & Balsmeyer families!

Neukams awarded Otto J. Bauer, Conservation Farmer of the Year

On February 1, 2022 Sam and Sandy Neukam were presented with the Otto J. Bauer, Conservation Farmer of the Year award. This award is sponsored by German American and Old National Banks and is presented to a Dubois County farmer who uses good soil and water conservation practices on their farm, putting in extra effort to conserve natural resources.

The Neukams utilize reduced tillage practices to reduce soil runoff and improve soil structure on most of their acres. They are conservation minded in utilizing NRCS programs to help address erosion and nutrient management through grassed waterways and waste storage facilities.

NRCS District Conservationist, Emily Kelly nominated the Neukams for this

award, stating "Sam and Sandy Neukam deserve the Conservation Farmer of the Year Award for their dedication to implementing diverse conservation practices on their farm. Over the years Sam has planted almost three thousand acres of cover crops through NRCS programs, not including any acres he planted on his own. These acres of cover crops helped decrease erosion, improve soil health, decrease soil compaction, and reduce evaporation on their cropland in Dubois County."

The Neukams many years of intensive farm management methods have reduced soil erosion, built soil structure, and helped to improve water quality in Dubois County.

Congratulation to the Neukam family, Dubois County SWCD's 2022 Otto J. Bauer, Conservation Farmer of the Year.



Dubois County SWCD Chair Brenda Sermersheim presents Sam and Sandy Neukam with the Otto J. Bauer, Conservation Farmer of the Year.

USDA Rural Development Indiana agricultural producers programs update

By Lewis M. Hilburn

USDA RD IN Public Information Officer

United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development Indiana State Director, Dr. Terry Goodin, reemphasized the ongoing programs designed to help rural Indiana agricultural producers. Programs like Rural Energy for America Program, Value Added Producers Grant, and Farm Labor Housing Loans are designed to help ag producers to grow.

"These programs give Hoosier agricultural producers the funding they need to sustain, grow, reduce their carbon footprint and improve their bottom line," Goodin said.

The Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to improve energy efficiency. Agricultural producers may also apply for new energy-efficient equipment and new system loans for agricultural production and processing. This program is geared toward agricultural producers, with at least 50% of their gross income coming from agricultural operations.

Funds may be used for renewable energy systems, such as:

- Biomass (biodiesel and ethanol, anaerobic digesters, and solid fuels).

- Geothermal for electric generation or direct use
- Hydropower below 30 megawatts
- Hydrogen
- Small and large wind generation
- Small and large solar generation

Funds may also be used for the purchase, installation, and construction of energy efficiency improvements, such as:

- High-efficiency heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems (HVAC)
 - Insulation
 - Lighting
 - Cooling or refrigeration units
 - Doors and windows
 - Electric, solar, or gravity pumps for sprinkler pivots
 - Switching from diesel to electric irrigation motor
 - Replacement of energy-inefficient equipment
- Agricultural producers may also use guaranteed loan

funds to install energy-efficient equipment and systems for agricultural production or processing. The deadline for applications is March 31, 2023.

Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program helps agricultural producers enter value-added activities to generate new products, create and expand marketing opportunities, and increase producer income.

Agricultural producers may receive priority if they are:

- Beginning farmer or rancher
- Socially-disadvantaged farmer or rancher
- Small or medium-sized farm
- A ranch structured as a family farm
- Farmer or rancher cooperative
- Proposing a mid-tier value chain

Grants are awarded through a national competition. Each fiscal year, applications are requested through a notice published in the Federal Register and an announcement posted on Grants.gov.

(Continued on page 14)

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ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT OF Dubois
January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022File with State Board of Accounts by March 1, 2023 (via Gateway) and with DSS by
March 31, 2023.

Balance Brought Forward	\$ 84,389.05
RECEIPTS	
State for District Operations	\$ 11,000.00
Clean Water Indiana Grant	\$ 20,387.52
County for District Operations	\$ 6,200.00
Federal and State Funds (not CWI)	\$ 19,398.75
Non Government Grants	\$ -
Other Grants (Dubois County Community Foundation)	\$ 404.73
Total Intergovernmental Receipts	\$ 57,391.00
Equipment Rental & Farm Income	\$ 23,053.84
Donations & Memberships	\$ -
Other Charges for Services (Martin Co SWCD CWI 2021-2023)	\$ 1,000.00
Other Charges for Services (Describe)	\$ -
Other Charges for Services (Describe)	\$ -
Total Charges for Services	\$ 24,053.84
Advertising	\$ -
Annual Meeting Income	\$ 1,520.00
Interest from Checking, CDs, Savings, Etc.	\$ 162.09
Reimbursements & Refunds	\$ 2,708.00
Sale of Used Equipment	\$ -
Sales Income	\$ 7.00
Workshop/Field Day Income	\$ -
Other Miscellaneous Revenue (Sales Tax Collected)	\$ 76.26
Other Miscellaneous Revenue (Describe)	\$ -
Other Miscellaneous Revenue (Describe)	\$ -
Total Miscellaneous Revenue	\$ 4,473.35
Sub-Total (before investment activity)	\$ 85,918.19
Sale of Investments (CDs, transfers)	\$ -
TOTAL (balance forward + receipts + investments)	\$ 170,307.24

USDA Rural Development Indiana agricultural producers programs update

(Continued from page 13)

VAPG is part of the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP), an umbrella program created under the 2018 Farm Bill. Producers can find other grant funding opportunities on the LAMP web page. The application window is closed but is expected to open sometime early in calendar year 2023. Once the application opens, applicants have 90 days to submit it.

On-Farm Labor Housing Loans provide affordable financing to develop or rehabilitate affordable rental housing for very low-income domestic, migrant, and seasonal farm laborers. This program provides low-interest loans to eligible borrowers to develop or rehabilitate affordable rental housing for very low-income domestic, migrant, and seasonal farm laborers. Borrowers must not otherwise be able to get commercial credit. Eligible applicants include:

- Family Farm Corporations
- Individuals
- Partnerships
- Eligible tenants are as follows:
Domestic farm laborers, individuals who earn a substan-

tial portion of their income from farm labor, retired farm laborers, or disabled farm laborers. The families of eligible tenants also are eligible.

Occupants must be U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or those legally admitted to this country and authorized to perform work in agriculture.

Funding availability is on a first-come, first-served basis or until the funds are depleted. Therefore, this program's application window is open with no closing date.

Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities, create jobs, and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety, and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural, Tribal, and high-poverty areas. For more information, visit <http://www.rd.usda.gov/in>. If you'd like to subscribe to USDA Rural Development updates, visit our GovDelivery subscriber page.

DISBURSEMENTS	
Capital Outlays (Equipment)	\$ 13,615.00
Annual Meeting Expenses	\$ 3,033.32
Audit Expense	\$ -
Bonding and Liability Insurance	\$ -
Clean Water Indiana Projects or other State grant funded projects	\$ 58,346.57
Conservation Education Programs	\$ 325.76
Contractual Services	\$ -
Cost-Share Projects/Federally-Funded	\$ -
Cost-Share Projects/SWCD-Funded	\$ -
CWI Payments to other SWCDs (D703)	\$ 3,000.00
Dues & Subscriptions	\$ 3,460.00
Employee Salaries Paid by District	\$ -
Office Supplies (D201)	\$ 2,229.42
Other Services & Charges (D312)	\$ 2,747.97
Postage & Delivery & Operating Expenses (D202)	\$ 1,144.03
Printing/Copying Expense (D303)	\$ 4,115.24
Rent	\$ -
Repair Expenses	\$ 7,357.30
Sales Tax Paid to IN Dept. of Revenue	\$ 67.93
Supervisor Per Diem	\$ 2,115.23
Supplies for Resale	\$ -
Telephone or Other Utilities	\$ -
Travel/Lodging/Mileage/Registration/Meals (D302)	\$ 7,555.51
Workshop/Field Day Expense (D312)	\$ 1,257.85
Other Disbursements (marketing, advertising, awards, sponsorships) (D703)	\$ 5,189.90
Other Disbursements (VUJC, LSI)	\$ 15,558.50
Other Disbursements (Federal WH, CRP Salary)	\$ 2,238.80
Other Disbursements (other)	
Total General Government Disbursements	\$ 133,358.33
Sub-Total (before investment activity)	\$ 133,358.33
Purchase of Investments (CDs, transfers)	\$ -
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS (disbursements + investments)	\$ 133,358.33
BALANCE AT DECEMBER 31	\$ 36,948.91
CLAIMS PAID BY COUNTY	
Salaries	\$ 158,317.00
Fringe	\$ 115,100.35
Other	\$ 6,200.00
INVESTMENT INVENTORY	
Beginning Investments	\$ -
Ending Investments	\$ -
Change (+/-)	\$ -
CASH BOXES	
Petty Cash	\$ 50.00
Cash Change	\$ -



Local Girl Scout, Isabel Schwenk, hammering in a water infiltration ring.



In January 2022 SWCD staff celebrate with award winners Duane Hopf, IASWCD Friend of Conservation Award Winner, and Alan Smock NRCS Earth Team Volunteer at the IASWCD annual conference held in Indianapolis.

2023 Annual Meeting Guest Speaker Kent Yeager



Kent Yeager

This year's Dubois SWCD Annual Meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 14th at the Thyen Clark Cultural Center in Jasper with guest speaker Kent Yeager, President of the Indiana Barn Foundation.

Yeager is a native of Harrison County, Indiana. He lives on the same farm where he was raised and his family has resided since 1873. Early in his life, Yeager was a farmer who volunteered in many agricultural organizations throughout his community.

In 1983, Yeager was named Indiana's Conservation Farmer of the Year, an award which recognizes Hoosier farmers who actively incorporate and practice conservation on the land.

In 1990, he became a field representative for Indiana Farm Bureau for the area that included Dubois County. He left Farm Bureau in 1993 to serve as the USDA Farm Service Agency State Executive Director, before returning to Farm Bureau as director of government relations in 1996. He retired from Indiana Farm Bureau in 2013, after serving as the director of government

relations for 17 years.

In his various jobs, Yeager traveled extensively across rural Indiana. One thing that caught his attention was the alarming rate of decline in the number of Indiana's historic barns. In 2013, he became a founding board member of the of the Indiana Barn Foundation and has been the organization's president since 2019.

The Indiana Barn Foundation was established to unite those who value the legacy of Hoosier farmers who have worked against the odds, often single handedly and with no financial incentive, to maintain and preserve these landmarks. They see Indiana's historic barns as being an asset to Indiana's larger cultural heritage; an asset worth preserving by assisting our farmers who struggle to maintain them. Their mission is to "Support the preservation of historic Indiana barns."

Join us in welcoming Kent Yeager to the Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District's annual meeting on Tuesday, February 14, 2023.

Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District Endowment

Everyone plays a role in conserving and preserving our natural resources. The Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District promotes the vital benefits of protecting and preserving all natural resources. Soil and Water Conservation District works to reduce soil erosion and promote clean water while providing technical, financial, and informational assistance to conserve natural resources for future generations. By educating county landowners and farmers on proper soil and water management, Soil and Water Conservation District is ensuring our natural resources are preserved. Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District Endowment was established to support the mission of this organization. The endowment helps fund the organization each year, assuring the work they do today can continue for generations to come. Whether a small gift or an estate gift, all contributions made to the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District Endowment support the long term sustainability of this important mission.



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