



Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Spring 2012

The Conservation Conversation

SWCD Recognized as Indiana Showcase District

The Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District was recently honored as a recipient of the District Showcase Award. The SWCD was recognized for successfully utilizing USDA NRCS Contribution Agreements to accomplish conservation work in Dubois County.

Indiana's District Showcase Award highlights the successes of county Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Specifically, the honor demonstrates how SWCDs partner with traditional and nontraditional groups, businesses, government agencies, local officials and volunteers to achieve District conservation goals.

The Showcase Award, sponsored by the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP), was presented to the SWCD Supervisors and Staff at the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation District's (IASWCD) awards banquet in Indianapolis on January 10, 2012. The ICP includes the IASWCD, Indiana Department of Environmental



SWCD staff and supervisors accepted the Showcase Award from NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty at the IASWCD's Annual Conference in Indianapolis. Bottom Row, Left to Right: Michael Wilhite, Judi Brown, Amanda Bough, Glenn Menke. Top: Alan Weyer, Bart Pitstick, Jane Hardisty, Brenda Sermersheim, Radius Weisman.

Management, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indiana State Department of Agriculture Division of Soil Conservation, Purdue Cooperative Extension Service, State Soil Conservation Board, USDA Farm Service Agency, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Although these organizations are from different agencies, all work together to accomplish their agency's conservation goals.

The Dubois County SWCD has a long history of working with local landowners to address conservation needs. The SWCD focuses primarily on erosion control and water quality, strongly utilizing USDA Farm Bill programs. Erosion control measures such as water and sediment control basins, grassed waterways, stream crossings, and pasture management are some of

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the practices that the SWCD assists with. Utilizing the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's contribution agree-

ments for technical and administrative assistance has allowed the SWCD to provide more answers to landowners' natural resource concerns.

To accomplish its goals, the SWCD utilizes skilled and trained supervisors to lead the SWCD, and qualified and talented staff members to complete the ever growing workload. A source of funding has always been a stumbling block. The SWCD is fortunate to have a board of supervisors who work to promote SWCD growth. This growth is also accomplished through the cooperation and support of Dubois County government,

through the County Council and Commissioners, who supported requests for additional staff and supplies. As a result, the SWCD has been able to

of this work to \$271,516.26. As the SWCD's capacity to complete work increased, the workload for the office increased accordingly. Further adding staff to meet this workload meant the need for new furniture and equipment for the office, which the SWCD was able to purchase. And NRCS has further supported us by providing computers for two of the staff members to

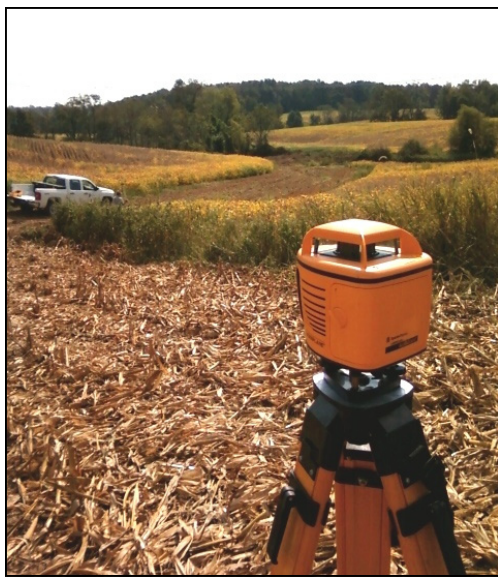
use, in addition to allowing the SWCD to add a third unit to their network. The ICP also invests in the SWCD by offering training opportunities for the staff to expand their skills and knowledge.

The SWCD utilized some of the funds to purchase field equipment to better accomplish its conservation goals of reducing sedimentation and improving water quality. Survey equipment to more quickly survey, layout, and design check conservation practices was purchased. The SWCD also bought a new No-Till drill for rental to landowners at a nominal fee, and a truck to allow the staff to more readily service the conservation needs in the county.



The Supervisors of the SWCD posed for a picture with the Showcase Award at the SWCD's Annual Meeting at St. Anthony on January 24th. Left to Right: Brenda Sermersheim, Glenn Menke, Alan Weyer, Greg Hoffman, John Jackle.

expand its staff to meet the growing conservation needs. When an opportunity for the contribution agreements was made available, the staff was in place that could fulfill the agreements.



A laser used to survey conservation practices. The SWCD truck is in the background.

Over the past 3 years, the SWCD has received contribution agreements totaling \$135,758.13. These agreements are for 50% of the work completed; the match contributed by the SWCD brings the total value

The SWCD still utilizes the Pacifica, the first vehicle that the County supplied for SWCD use.

The contribution agreements also allowed the SWCD to double the Clean Water Indiana grant funds received from the state, through the Division of Soil Conservation. In 2010 and 2011, the SWCD has received grant funds for the installation of cover crops. The funds were extended to landowners in the form of cost share incentive payments, and using these funds, landowners installed cover crops on just under 900 acres in 2010 and 1,400 acres in 2011.

Through the addition of the staff and equipment, natural resource concerns of the Dubois County landowners have been more quickly and efficiently addressed by SWCD staff. This allows the NRCS District Conservationist to work with additional landowners to expand the customer base that the Dubois County Field Office serves. The SWCD staff assists with this additional workload. Since SWCD goals are set locally, the staff can assist with a variety of projects whether the funding source is national or state government. SWCD staff is also available to assist with urban conservation projects, such as industrial development or residential subdivisions.

Utilizing the contribution agreement and other sources of funding, the SWCD continues to grow and expand its programming. Future plans include a demonstration area in cooperation with Vincennes University Jasper Campus, and the SWCD is also developing a local cost share program to address conservation needs not being met through other programs.

The local conservation team... the staff, the supervisors,

county government, and the ICP...work to support this



SWCD staff being trained to use the Total Station, the SWCD's newest piece of survey equipment.

SWCD. Without all of the pieces of this machine working together in unison, Dubois County would not have the SWCD that exists today.



The SWCD has many conservation items available for rent by landowners, including a Great Plains 7' Notill Drill that rents for \$8 per acre (pictured above), as well as two blanket staplers for erosion control blankets (pictured at left). These staplers make the work of installing blankets easy! Contact the office at 812-482-1171 x3 to schedule your time to use these tools.

SWCD Celebrates Another Great Year of Conservation

One hundred ninety seven people came out to the St. Anthony Community Center on January 24 as the Dubois County SWCD held its 66th Annual Meeting. A catered meal began at 6:30pm and was followed by highlights of the SWCD's 2011 programming.

Joining the SWCD as guest speaker for the evening was Hal Wolford. Hal was the host of "The Backroads" series that WEHT Channel 25 in Evansville aired for ten years in the 1990s. Hal shared humorous stories he had collected through the years about Dubois County and the surrounding area.

At the meeting, Alan Smock was elected to a Supervisor position for a three year term, filling the open position left by the retirement of Alan Weyer from the position. Smock grew up on a grain and livestock farm located in Bartholomew County, Indiana. His family still farms the land, part of which has been in the family since 1850. He is also a member of the Indiana Forestry and Woodland Owners Association and actively manages his forest land located in Dubois County.



Nearly two hundred people attended the SWCD's Annual Meeting.

Alan is a retired mechanical engineer, holding a degree from Rose Hulman.

Also noteworthy from the Annual Meeting are the many local farmers who were recognized for their outstanding conservation efforts. Sam Oxley was presented the Otto J. Bauer Outstanding Conservation Farmer of the Year award. The award is named in memory of Otto J. Bauer. Bauer was a champion of soil and water conservation efforts in Dubois County, and was a member of the SWCD board of supervisors from 1969 until 1986. Tom Krodel, of Old National Bank, made the presentation to Oxley. Oxley has been a champion for soil and water conservation for years, doing many great things to prevent erosion on his farmland near Birdseye. He has also used his land to host the SWCD's soil judging competition, giving local high school agriculture students a chance to put into practice their soil knowledge. Sam is also a former Supervisor of the SWCD and aided the SWCD in its mission to promote good stewardship of our soil and water resources.

The SWCD also recognizes a forestland owner each year who carries out a wise forest stewardship program on his land. This year the OFS Brands Forest Stewardship Award was presented to David Altman. Scott Reckelhoff, of OFS Brands, presented the award to Altman. David is a forestland owner who actively manages his forest for maximum potential. He has



Sam Oxley received the 2012 Conservation Farmer of the Year Award, presented by Tom Krodel of Old National Bank.

attended several forestry-related workshops the SWCD has put on, including one on invasive species management in the forest. The Supervi-



David Altman received the OFS Brands Forest Stewardship Award at the SWCD's Annual Meeting.

sors of the SWCD selected Altman for the award because they feel he is an example to the community in what good forest stewardship is.

Every year the SWCD also hosts a soil judging invitational in the county on a local farm to help prepare local students for regional competitions. Sixty six students making up seventeen teams participated in this year's soils judging competition held near Holland on a farm owned by Glenn and Melvin Menke. Ten schools from eight different counties, including Dubois, participated in the event. The Ken McWilliams



Greg Hoffman presented the Ken McWilliams Soil Judging Award to the Forest Park FFA Team. Congratulations to Coach Applegate and her team!

Memorial Award for Soil Judging Excellence recognizes the top ranking team from Dubois County. This year the Forest Park FFA Team received the award. Greg Hoffman presented the award to Coach Annette Applegate and her team.

Alan Weyer announced to those gathered that the SWCD was one of four conservation districts received the District Showcase Award. The award honors SWCD's for unique successes in conservation efforts in their own counties. Dubois County SWCD was recognized for its success in utilizing contribution agreement funding in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Through the funding brought in by the contribution agreement, great strides



Alan Weyer was honored for his years of contribution to the SWCD as Chair of the Supervisors. Alan will continue to stay involved with the SWCD as an Associate Supervisor.

have been made in soil conservation in the county. See the cover story in this newsletter for more on the award.

At the close of the meeting, Brenda Sermerheim presented Alan Weyer with an award for his many years of dedication to the SWCD. He has served as chair of the SWCD Supervisors for the past several years. Alan has agreed to remain on as an Associate Supervisor and will still be active in many of the SWCD's projects.

Be a Friend to Pollinators

For most Americans, pollen means allergies and bees mean stings-- but to farmers, bees and pollen mean much more. Pollinators play a tremendous economic role. Most fruit, vegetable and seed crops - and other plants that provide fiber, medicines and fuel - are pollinated by animals. Some scientists estimate that one out of every three bites of food we eat exists because of animal pollinators like bees, butterflies and moths, birds and bats, and beetles and other insects.

Pollinators visit flowers in their search for food (nectar and pollen). During a flower visit, a pollinator may accidentally brush

against the flower's reproductive parts, unknowingly depositing pollen from a different flower. The plant then uses the pollen to produce a fruit or seed. Many plants cannot reproduce without pollen carried to them by foraging pollinators.

The problem is, too many people see the pollination process as a free service from nature; most people don't know the unprecedented threats facing wild and managed pollinators worldwide. Managed honey bee colonies have shrunk by 25 percent since 1990. For more than a decade, biologists have documented declines in populations of migratory pollinators including butterflies, bats and birds. Habitat loss and excessive exposure to agrichemicals, as well as spread of diseases, parasitic mites and the invasion of Africanized honey bees are

often mentioned for what's been called an impending pollination crisis.

On your land, there are several things you can do to help pollinators.

Don't disturb wild areas. Bumblebees nest in grass in old mouse nests, for instance, and other bees nest in dead wood.

Let plants bloom. Try to time mowing and other management decisions so that plants have the opportunity to bloom.

Use pollinator-friendly plants in your landscape. Shrubs and trees such as dogwood, blueberry, cherry, plum, willow and poplar provide pollen or nectar, or both, early in spring when food is scarce.

Choose a mixture of plants for spring, summer and

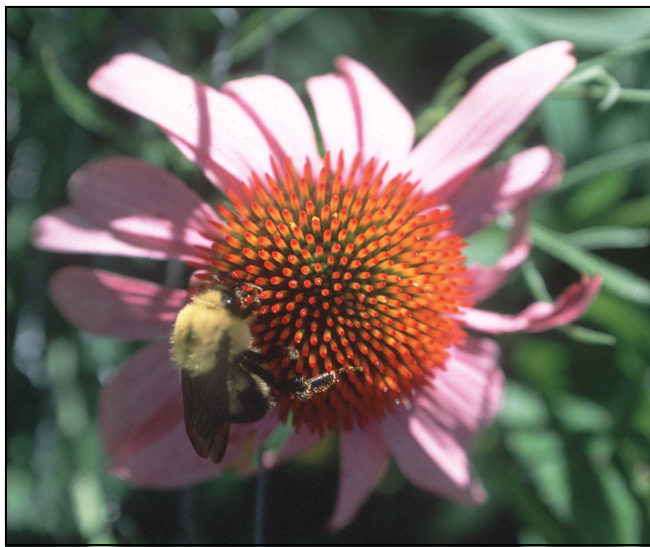
fall. Different flower colors, shapes and scents all attract a wide variety of pollinators.

Reduce or eliminate pesticide use in your landscape. Or incorporate plants that attract beneficial insects for pest control. If you use pesticides, use them sparingly and responsibly.

Provide clean water for pollinators with a shallow dish, bowl or birdbath with half-submerged stones for perches.

Support land conservation in your community by helping create and maintain community gardens and green spaces to ensure that pollinators have appropriate habitat.

For more information on how you can help pollinators through your land management choices, visit www.pollinator.org. You can also visit the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute's website at www.whmi.nrcs.usda.gov for more great ideas.



Pollinator-friendly plants include many native wildflowers. Choosing a mixture of native plants to bloom at different times of the year will attract a variety of pollinators.

What Can I Do About Eroding Ditch Banks?

The photo at right is a perfect example of why many farmers are having trouble with their drainage ditches. On the left side of the ditch, the farmer is farming way too close to the ditch and spraying the vegetation on the ditch bank. You can see clearly that erosion and mass wasting on side slopes is occurring. Over time, more and more of the soil on this side of the bank will erode and fall into the ditch. Not only will this clog the ditch and promote flooding more easily, over time the bank will erode the field more and more, meaning there will be less to farm.



An eroding ditch bank on the left and a stable ditch bank on the right. Photo courtesy Chris Lee, NRCS.

But take a look at the other side. The right side of the photo shows how the farmer is not encroaching or spraying near the ditch itself. The vegetation that is left untouched on this side of the bank will act as a stabilizer to the soil, reducing the amount of soil erosion that will occur.

Many ditch problems are a direct result of poor land management and are easy to correct. If you would like help getting your ditches stabilized, stop by the NRCS office and talk with Bart Pitstick, NRCS District Conservationist, today! Call us at 812-482-1171 x3 to make an appointment.

SWCD Partners with VUJC to Form the Land Stewardship Initiative

The Dubois County SWCD has recently entered into a partnership with Vincennes University Jasper Campus to manage their cropland. A steering committee comprised of many different organizations in the area has been set up and the partnership has been named the VUJC Land Stewardship Initiative. Some of the goals of the project are to promote soil health to the community and to develop a respected research and education area.

The Dubois County SWCD is working with the Indiana Association of SWCD's to apply for a federal grant which will provide funding to help install conservation best management practices on the VUJC cropland. The project at VUJC will be part of a larger group of projects with similar research and education goals around the state.



The SWCD will be managing the cropland and the profit from the cash crops will be used to further the mission of the project. Innovative conservation practices, such as cover crops for one example, are already being planned. In the future, field days, workshops and other educational opportunities will take place on the campus. Soil tests to determine current soil health are being conducted and all of the cropland will convert to using no-till practices. Soil tests will be taken each year to show the effect of long-term no-till practices combined with fall cover crops each year on improving soil health.

Check out our website at www.duboisswcd.org often for more information! Field days and other educational opportunities will start to be planned in the near future.



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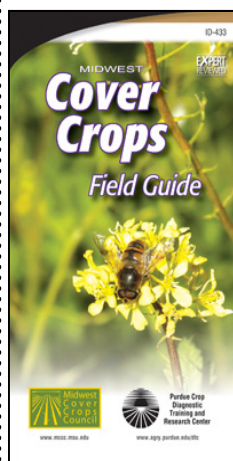
The Conservation Conversation

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For address corrections or to be taken off the list,
please contact the office by email at
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or call 812-482-1171 x3



The Midwest Cover Crops Field Guide is now available for Purdue Extension. Copies are only \$5! This is a great resource to help you select, grow and use cover crops in your farming systems. Rediscover the role that cover crops can play in sustainable farming systems and avoid costly mistakes by getting expert advice.

Contact Purdue Extension today at
812-482-1782 for your copy!



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What's Wrong With This Tree?

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