



Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District

1486 Executive Blvd. Suite A • Jasper, IN 47546

812-482-1171 x3 • www.duboisswcd.org

Winter, 2016-17

The Conservation Conversation

Fall Field Day

On September 13th, Dubois County SWCD and the VUJC Land Stewardship Initiative hosted a Fall Field Day. The day started in the VUJC CTIM building with examining various aspects of soil health from the smallest of micro-organisms living in our soil to best practices ensuring continued soil health.

Dan Luczynski representing the NRCS Soil Health Team compared no-till soil samples collected from the LSI property with soil samples from a heavily disturbed soil collected in the 'borrow area.' During construction of the VUJC CTIM building in 2013, a 1.4 acre area of soil was 'borrowed' to create proper soil structure for the foundation of the CTIM building. The 'borrow area' is now a zone of recovery as most of the top soil was stripped away and many nutrients were lost. Field Day participants saw the world of living organisms that are in the soil projected from Luczynski's microscope onto a large overhead screen.

Next, Hans Kok, PhD, CCA, Conservation Consultant and Field Manager for the Soil Health Partnership took the group outside to

view the 'borrow area'. Kok offered suggestions on how to rebuild the soil structure. An interesting note was to visibly see the difference in the health of the soybeans planted in the 'borrow area' compared to the regular, no till cover crop field.



Betsy Bower, CCA and Agronomist with Ceres Solutions, and Jesse Uebelhor Agronomy Sales Manager with Superior Ag Resources Coop Inc. tag teamed an informational packed presentation on terminating cover crop and herbicide carryover. Their dialog offered many tips on what works well for Dubois County farmers.



Lastly, Purdue Extension Educator, Ken Eck, discussed drift control. His presentation followed nicely after Jesse Uebelhor's tips on choosing the right size spray nozzle for the equipment and the job at hand. Participants could also qualify for PARP credits. Lunch was sponsored by German American Bank.

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Dubois County Creek Sweep

Saturday, October 29th was the first annual Dubois County Creek Sweep. Neighbors and kayakers joined in to clean up their roadside ditches and creeks to help improve water quality. The event started at 9 am and continued to noon.



A total of fifteen volunteers removed approximately 3,000 pounds of debris from four area waterways. Included in the sweep was 34 bags of trash, 13 tires, small appliances and furniture.



City of Jasper Stormwater provided prizes for the strangest item found which included GI Joe figures. All volunteers were thanked with a \$10 voucher to use for recycling and disposal at the Solid Waste District Process Center.



More help is needed in the future as not all local creeks were cleaned. This event was sponsored by the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District and Dubois County Solid Waste District with assistance from Dubois County Highway Department and City of Jasper Stormwater.

Hoosier Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society

The Hoosier Chapter SWCS Annual Meeting was held in Hulman River House, Indianapolis Zoo, on November 10th, 2016. The topic for the day was, "From the Wabash to the Gulf, Connecting Conservation to Healthy Wildlife Habitat."

Indiana is part of the Mississippi River Basin and has been identified as one of the states contributing excess nitrogen to the Gulf of Mexico creating hypoxia areas (oxygen free dead zones.) The Nature Conservancy in Indiana, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Soil and Water Districts (SWCD), US Fish and Wildlife, and Indiana Department of Agriculture, Environmental Management and Natural Resources are working together with landowners along the Wabash River watershed and other mid-western watersheds to restore soil health and floodplain forests, and install conservation practices that make a difference locally and downstream.

Participants learned how and why the Indianapolis Zoo's new dolphin show was created and how it shows what we do locally can effect wildlife, water quality, and nature downstream.



The Mississippi River Basin/Gulf Hypoxia Initiative (GHI), led by seven LCC's (Landscape Conservation Cooperatives) created an integrated framework consisting of resource management objectives, a tiered set of conservation strategies within five agricultural systems (corn and soybean, grazing lands, floodplain forest, rice and cotton) and a spatial analysis to align work in four ecological systems (headwater, fields, upland prairies, mid-sized riparian streams, and floodplains) in water quality zones across the Mississippi Basin.

The GHI is focused on two main components: what to do and where to do it; forming a holistic target approach that allows resource managers and policy makers to identify both the conservation actions needed and the best places to target efficient and effective conservation investment on the landscape.

To learn more:
<https://tallgrassprairielcc.org/issue/gulf-hypoxia>

The Vincennes University Jasper Campus and Land Stewardship Initiative was formed in 2012 as a partnership between the campus and the Soil and Water Conservation District to utilize the VUJC property to implement and demonstrate conservation systems and techniques on the campus' cropland, woodland, and managed prairie. Beginning the Fall of 2016, the LSI is refocusing its attention to the cropland and is seeking ways to grow its outreach and education.

The LSI will continue to implement strategies that improve soil health through the use of no-till and cover crops, along with innovative practices that improve nutrient utilization with the use of yield mapping, grid soil sampling and prescription application of fertilization on the property. Water quality testing will continue to measure the nutrient retention on the property.

The 2016 soybean harvest yielded approximately 52 bushels per acre. A cover crop mix of cereal rye, winter peas, and crimson clover was drilled in by use of a No-Till Drill rather than being air flown on as it had been in the past. Drilling the cover crop seeds seemed to improve the seed-to-soil contact.

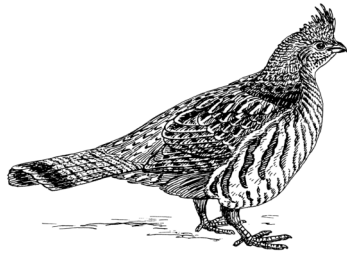
In August, Melissa Ruschau joined the staff of the SWCD. She is the new coordinator for the VUJC LSI. A graduate of Wittenberg University with a BA in Biology; she comes with many years of experience in environmental education. She started her career at Ruth Lilly YMCA camp in Indiana, spent several years as the naturalist at Lutheran Memorial Camp in Fulton, Ohio and most recently worked for the Columbus, Ohio Metro Park System. Growing up on the shores of Lake Erie, she is passionate about water quality.



If you would like to be included on the mailing list for future workshops or receive the LSI newsletter, please contact Melissa at 812-482-1171 ext #3 melissa.ruschau@in.nacdnet.net

Ruffed Grouse Society and ICP Forestry Training

For fifty years, the Ruffed Grouse Society has been dedicated to enhancing healthy forests for ruffed grouse, American woodcock, and other wildlife. Like most grouse, the ruffed grouse spends most of their time on the ground preferring a mixed woodland. They also frequently seek gravel and clover along road beds during early mornings and late afternoons. The ruffed grouse is on the verge of extirpation with a 98% decrease and the American woodcock also showing decline in population. The work of habitat creation is crucial to protect, create, and enhance healthy forests through scientific management practices.



The Warrick county SWCD hosted an ICP Forestry Training on October 26th, 2026. The morning session began at the F.O.P. Lodge in Boonville with author, Sally Weeks as the presenter. Weeks is a native Hoosier who was born and raised on a dairy farm. She found her interest in trees while she was an undergraduate student at Purdue University. Weeks received a BSF in wildlife management and a MS in Forestry. She has taught aspects of tree identification at Purdue University for over 15 years and has written two books, "Native Trees of the Midwest" and "Shrubs and Woody Vines of Indiana and the Midwest". Weeks gave an in-depth presentation on native and non-native tree and plant identification.

The Ruffed Grouse Society has plans for forest management which includes degreed biologists and affects 28 states and over 500,000 acres of habitat.

For more information, contact:

Dan Gehring, Ruffed Grouse Society
at dan@gehring-us.com

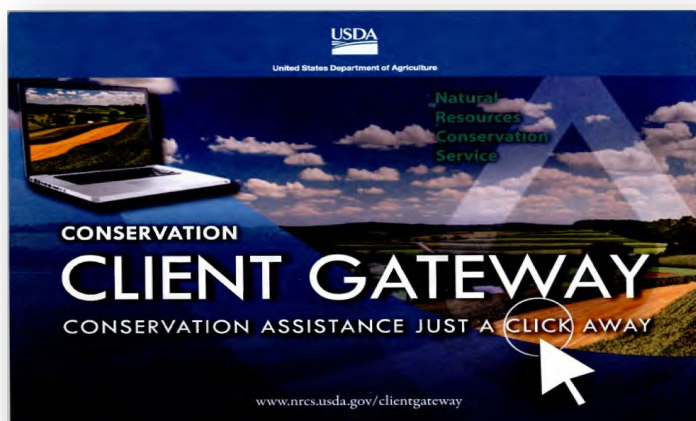
or

Dan McGuckin,
Habitat Solutions Wildlife and Forest Management
at danmcguckin@yahoo.com



The participants' newly learned skills were tested in the afternoon session as they took a walk around Scales Lake. Most trees had not yet shed their leaves on that day, so leaf study was used as part of tree identification along with bark, fruit, and overall tree size and shape.

Client Gateway and Winterizing Cattle Operations



Conservation Client Gateway is a new, secure website that makes it even easier for you to receive conservation assistance.

If you sign up you'll be able to do the following online:

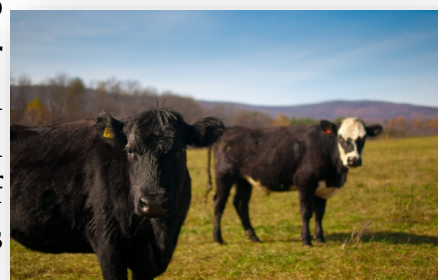
- Request Technical Conservation Assistance.
- Request and track payments.
- Review and electronically sign documents.
- Apply for Conservation Financial Assistance.
- And much more.

Client Gateway is entirely voluntary.

Learn more here:
www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway

When the last of the harvest is collected, it is time to give back to the land. Conservation practices; such as, leaving standing corn stubble and seeding the bare ground with cover crops, help the soil capture excess nutrients, and foster soil health by increasing the organic content of the topsoil

Winter is also a good time for beef producers to assess their pastures and facilities and take care of routine tasks to prepare



their cattle operations for the colder temperatures. Cattle are healthier, have more successful pregnancies, and have better rates of gain when they have access to quality nutrition and facilities during the cold winter months. One recommendation is to assess pastures and hay fields and have forages analyzed to know what producers have in terms of forage. Then they can start supplement feeding strategies based on animal protein and energy needs.

Beef producers should ensure there are adequate minerals and vitamins in the diet by providing a high quality vitamin-mineral mix to help with immune function and reproduction.

Fencing, windbreaks or pasture shelters, and barns should be checked and repaired. Protecting cattle from wind chill eases cattle's energy requirements.

Grazing Bites by Victor Shelton

Winter is upon us. At least that is what the weatherman keeps saying. We have been blessed with really good fall conditions in most areas. Some areas could have benefited from a little bit more rain in October and early November, but for the most part, soil moisture levels were pretty good across Indiana. I am pleased with the fall forage growth and the amount of stockpiled forage. We have now seen cold enough temperatures, at least for the most part, to assume that we are now dealing with dormant forage.

If possible and practical, it is best to not start grazing stockpiled forage until it goes dormant. Until it goes dormant, every time that solar panel of leaves is removed, the plant will draw from the reserves in the roots. If you hurt those reserves too much, you will set back spring growth. If you don't allow a longer rest period in the spring to allow the plant to build back roots and reserves, you can really hurt your forage stand. There are times where grazing can be beneficial; such as, for reducing competition early spring for frost seeded legumes. We will consider it dormant at this point.

If you are new to stockpiling, there are a few things to think about. It is usually best when first entering a field to give your livestock at least two or three days' worth of forage. You should start the grazing process on the end of the field with the water. You might be able to use a portable watering system for awhile, moving it along with the livestock, but that type of system gets challenging to keep from freezing. Back fencing is not nearly as important once the forages go dormant, so there is nothing really wrong with just utilizing water on one end of the field; as long as, the walking distance and the time frame on the field doesn't create too much trailing.

The allocation that you gave the livestock can now be grazed down to the desired residual height, ideally still 3-4 inches for most fescues and orchardgrass. Once the plants are at that desired stop grazing height, it is time to allocate more. To get the highest efficiency, daily allocations are best, but you can increase the amount as needed, especially if you are going to be gone an day or so.

These allocations are easy to do with a temporary fence, especially if you are not back fencing. If you are back fencing, you need three sets which would include a reel, poly-wire, and enough step-in posts to complete a run across the field. If you are not back fencing, then two sets are best, but you can make it with just one. With two sets, you can have one in place, and move the second with less concern of the livestock moving faster than you do. If back fencing, the third fence is the back fence. Once the livestock is moved into the new allocation, the old back fence can be moved ahead of time for the next allocation. This is especially nice if you are fighting daylight or timing of that next move.

I prefer to keep things easy and also where I'm less likely to accidentally shock myself. Solid plastic handles on the end of the poly-wire means you can hang it on a hot or non-energized wire and it won't be 'hot' until you make it hot. You then make it hot using jumper leads which look like little miniature jumper cables. It also helps to have a set of these per run also. While I'm still on the topic, I recommend buying quality poly-wire! The best poly-wire has eight or more strands of stainless steel strands in it. I'm not a fan of poly-tape, which is very similar, but usually ribbon-like and about a half inch wide. The tape is harder to keep taut and nearly impossible with ice or snow on it.

Strip grazing of stockpiled forage can be done on any size of field, but longer, more narrow fields are certainly the easiest to work with. When you are laying out new permanent fence divisions, consider this if you plan to do any stockpiling. My wife thinks that any run over 300 feet is too much when she has to fill in for me. . . So we have gone with more longer, narrower fields, and I have to admit I find it kind of nice too.

A step-in post with a smaller, yet strong steel tip and a foot peg for easy installation works the best for the frozen soil conditions that are ahead. When grazing heavier stockpile, you will find that the ground does not freeze much unless we get extended sub-zero temperatures creating a nice insulation blanket. Keep your choice of reels reasonably cheap at least to start with if you are going to be doing short runs. Longer runs make it easier to justify more expensive ones because of the gearing.

Good quality stockpile is usually tall fescue. Nothing stockpiles as well and holds its nutritional value longer through the winter as tall fescue. If you have stockpiled orchardgrass, use it first. Orchardgrass starts falling apart fairly quickly and has little value as winter progresses. Quality stockpiled tall fescue quite often has better feed values than a lot of hay that is fed at the same time.

*Find the September Grazing Bites in its entirety or past issues at:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/in/technical/landuse/pasture/>*



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**The Dubois County SWCD
Annual Report
will be once again placed as
an insert in
The Ferdinand News
in January 2017.**

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complimentary copy,
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