



Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District

1486 Executive Blvd. Suite A • Jasper, IN 47546

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Spring, 2017

The Conservation Conversation

LSI Conservation Day

On Friday, March 3rd, 2017, Dubois County SWCD held a Conservation Day at the VUJC CTIM Building, in Jasper.

Topics for the day were: Nutrient Recycling & Soil Ecology Biology of Soil Compaction, and Economics of Cover Crops.

Guest speaker was Jim Hoorman. Hoorman is the NRCS Regional Soil Health Specialist for Ohio and Michigan (OSU). He specializes in cover crops, soil health, and water quality. Hoorman's research efforts have concentrated on using grass, legumes, and brassica cover crops to improve soil structure, increase soil organic matter, tie up manure nutrients to prevent runoff, increase water infiltration, and decrease soil erosion. He has produced several fact sheets and power point presentations on "Soil Ecology and Nutrient Management" and "The Biology of Soil Compaction."



"Soil health is a hot topic that people want more information on as farmers are looking for ways to improve soil structure and reduce soil compaction," Hoorman said. "Cover crops improve the soil by adding carbon, which makes the soil more productive." It also takes less fuel to plant a cover crop than it does to till the soil.

"The added benefit of cover crops is the increase in soil organic matter,"

he said. "Tillage destroys soil organic matter. Tillage will never make your soil better. It is a short-term benefit while cover crops are a long term benefit." Live plants typically have 1,000 to 2,000 times more soil microbes living around the roots compared to bare soil.

"Microbes are 'soluble bags of fertilizer,' recycling soil nutrients and feeding the plant," Hoorman said. "If you have live roots year-round, you can feed the soil microbes year-round and improve your soil."

PARP credits were available with Ken Eck speaking on *Using Precision Application for Herbicide and Fertilizer Setbacks*.

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Earth Day and Arbor Day



Earth Day is scheduled for Saturday, April 22, 2017. This is a world-wide event to demonstrate support for environment protection. It was first celebrated 1970 and will be celebrated in more than 190 countries this year.

Six days later, Arbor Day is scheduled to be celebrated on Friday, April 28th, 2017. This is a celebration of trees and their importance to providing shelter, stabilization for the ground, and the beauty to the beholder. While Arbor Day is a US holiday, several other countries have adopted similar observances including Japan, Australia, Korea, and Yugoslavia. The first Arbor Day was celebrated on April 10, 1872 in Nebraska. More than 1 million trees were planted in Nebraska on that day. In 1970, President Richard Nixon declared Arbor day a federal holiday and it is now observed the last Friday in April each year.

A forest's job is never done. Forests are alive and working 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Trees provide oxygen in the air that we breathe. One large tree can make enough oxygen in one day for four people. A single tree can absorb 48 pounds of carbon dioxide per year and can sequester one ton of carbon dioxide by the time it reaches 40 years old. Trees also provide shelter and food.

Earth Day/Arbor Day projects we can do are: plant trees; visit a nursery and consider buying some plants; recycle paper and cardboard to conserve trees, hold a paper drive and use the proceeds to purchase a special tree; turn off the lights when you leave the room thus saving energy which cuts down on pollution which is harmful to forests; and finally reduce waste by buying only what you need, donating what you don't need or use anymore thus saving landfill space and saving trees from being used to make things we don't need.

Excerpts taken from USDA Forest Service, NACD, and Project Learning Tree



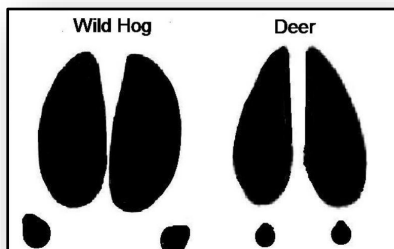
Growing the next generation of environmental stewards is Project Learning Tree's goal. PLT helps develop students' awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the environment, build their skills, and ability to make informed decisions, and encourages them to take personal responsibility for sustaining the environment and our quality of life that depends on it. By teaching students how to think, not what to think, about complex environmental issues, PTL helps young people learn the problem-solving skills they need to make informed choices about the environment.

Invasive Species—Feral Pigs in Indiana

Wild pigs have been illegally released for sport hunting or were formerly domesticated pigs allowed to become feral. They vary in color and their hair is coarser and denser than a domesticated pig. Feral pigs' tails are straight, never curled like that of a domesticated pig. The feral pigs usually travel no more than 10 square miles and choose to live in dense vegetation. They prefer acorns and other nuts in the fall and will eat grasses, leaves, berries, fruits, insects, frogs, snakes, mice, eggs of ground nesting birds, young rabbits, fawns, and small livestock.

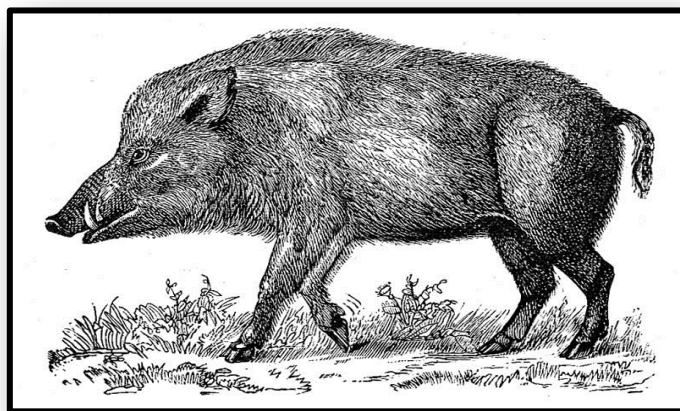
Wild pigs damage cropland, parks, lawns, and rural cemeteries. Damage to wildlife nesting, winter cover crops, food plots, and water holes by wild pigs is common. They can carry diseases that transfer to domestic swine, livestock, and even people. Additionally, they can contaminate the local human food and water sources.

A landowner, tenant, or other person with written permission of the landowner can shoot or trap a wild hog on that landowners' private property without a permit. If trapped, the wild pig must be killed at the trap site or euthanized immediately after removing it from the trap site.



The DNR, in cooperation with the USDA Wildlife Services and the Indiana State Board of Animal Health, are working with impacted landowners in providing technical information to control the wild pig populations.

In November, 2016 at an area conservation meeting, Travis Buckel, stated that Lawrence, Jackson, and Washington counties are the three known locations for feral pigs. In 2014, Buckel stated that 40 feral pigs were killed. In 2015, around 140 pigs were killed. He believes that there are about 500-700 feral pigs living in Indiana.



If a wild pig is seen, call 1-855-386-0370.

Or contact: <http://www.ag.purdue.edu/entm/wildlifehotline/pages/default.aspx>.

Or contact the National Feral Swine System at www.feralswine.org.

2017 Otto J Bauer Conservation Farmer of the Year

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 St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Haysville, Indiana on Tuesday, February 7th, 2016, Tony Sanders and Tim Robinette, Ag Lenders from Old National Bank and Brenda Sermersheim, Ag Lender from German American Bank presented the 2017 Otto J. Bauer Outstanding Conservation Farmer of the Year to Kurt Voelkel.

The Voelkel Green Acres Farm is located in Boone and Harbinson townships and includes over 600 acres of cropland. Kurt Voelkel is continuing his grandfather and father's good stewardship and has future plans to pass the farm and the conservation practices to his twenty-five year old son, Corey. Voelkel's dad, Glenn, started no tilling, installing several dry dams, and using cover crops 25 years ago. Kurt Voelkel and his wife, Annie, have continued these strong conservation practices and included many others; such as, grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins, and grade stabilization structures. They have also installed waste storage facilities on their own without any cost share assistance from the state or federal government. Through CRP, Green Acres Farm also includes permanent wildlife habitat and pollinator plantings.

Kurt Voelkel enjoys working on the farm and operates his acres the best way he can. He likes making his own hours and being his own boss; although time management in the spring is his biggest challenge. A lot

depends on weather and soil conditions that determines when he can begin any spring task. Another pastime for Kurt Voelkel is recreational running. He started ten years ago and has run 4 full Indy Monumental Marathons and many Strassenfest 5 Ks. He enjoys the camaraderie and the positive outlook of other runners. Farming and running gives him time to think.

The Otto J. Bauer Outstanding Conservation Farmer of the Year award is named in memory of Otto J. Bauer. Bauer was a champion of soil and water conservation efforts in Dubois County and a member of the SWCD Board of Supervisors from 1969-1986. Voelkel stated he knew Otto Bauer and Bauer's son, Mike, both whom have passed. Kurt and Annie's many years of intensive farm management methods have mimicked their friends' efforts in reducing soil erosion and improving water quality in Dubois County.

"A loss of one inch of topsoil takes a lifetime to get it back," Kurt Voelkel stated. "It is best to save the soil before it gets to the Mississippi River and beyond."



2017 OFS Brand Forest Stewardship Award

Hilary Blessinger was presented the OFS Brands Forest Stewardship Award by Scott Reckelhoff, property manager of OFS Brands at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Haysville during Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District's (SWCD) Annual Meeting held Tuesday, February 7th, 2017. 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.

This year's recipient, Hilary Blessinger of Blessinger's Conserve LLC, owns multiple forest tracts within Dubois, Daviess, and Crawford counties. Blessinger's son, Chris, manages all the forest acres and is the trustee of the family business venture. The Blessingers own approximately 300 acres in Dubois County. Of this acreage, most of it is Classified Forest with some cropland. In Daviess County, all of the twenty acres they own are Classified Forest. Their 88 acres in Crawford County is in the first year of a 3-year EQIP program.

Blessinger learned that one of the desires of his ancestors immigrating to the USA, was to own land which may not have been available from the country they left behind. Blessinger stated that his grandparents were farmers and from them he continues the legacy of strong conservation values of landownership to his family while preserving the forestland and protecting the wildlife. After his stint in the war, Blessinger began finding land, trading land, and buying land. Some of this newly purchased property was already in

Classified Forest while others were stripped over coal fields. He relies heavily on professional help to inform him and give him good guidance to maintain the health of the forest properties. He named professionals; such as, Janet Eger, Abbie Irwin, Doug Brown, and Thom McKinney and gave them high regards as to the part they play in early detection, control, planting, and harvesting.

Blessinger has had several timber harvests and stated, "I won't cut anything unless I am told it is needed." All timber post-harvest work is followed up by a professional for TSI (Timber Standing Improvement). He sees wind damage and invasive species as two of the biggest challenges he faces. 2016 was a big year for tackling invasive species on over 70 acres of his forest property in Crawford County. In 2011, 1,400 trees were planted in Dubois County and in 2013, 600 trees were planted in converted crop fields in Dubois County to stop erosion. Over the years, Blessinger has seen the newly planted trees grow and wildlife move in. He stated that more trees will be planted this spring and hopes to see more ponds built to provide the necessary water for the wildlife.



Southwest Envirothon at Princeton

The Southwest Regional Envirothon was recently held at the Toyota Visitors Center, Princeton, Indiana. The contest was coordinated by the Gibson and Posey County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) with assistance from the Toyota Visitors Center staff. District employees from Warrick, Vanderburgh, Dubois (Justin Bary and Patti Schroeder), Daviess, and Pike SWCDs also assisted with the Envirothon educational contest.

Teams competing from the Southwest Contest were Forest Park, Gibson County Home School, Southern Indiana Career and technical Center, Gibson Southern High School, Princeton Community High School, Mt. Vernon High School, and Perry Central High School. Some schools brought more than one team. Winning first place this year was the Gibson County Home School students with advisor, Julie Loehr. Second place winners were Perry Central Team #1, with their advisor, Olivia Steckler. The two top placing teams earn the privilege to represent the Southwest at the Indiana State Envirothon in April. Winning third place was Princeton Community High School Environmental Class with their advisor, Jim Maglis. The third place team will be an alternate at the state level.

A team consists of 5 high school students and a coach or advisor. The advisor may be anyone interested in the environment and coaching students. The Envirothon Competition is an annual event with several regional contests held throughout the state. The top winning teams from each regional contest are eligible to compete in the Indiana State Envirothon that will be held Wednesday, April 26th at Camp Illiana, Washington, Indiana.

Bill Harper from Toyota's Environmental Department spoke to the students about Toyota's recycling program where 95% of the waste from the plant is recycled.



Forest Park Students: Clarissa Weyer, Andrew Schuler, Lauren Lubbehusen, Jarod Knust, and Aaron Hurst.



Forest Park Students: Emma Uebelhor, Kendra Steckler, Ryan Burke, Sara Helming, and Miah Schaefer.

**A tram tour through
The Toyota Plant
by students, advisors, and
district employees was
very educational and interesting.**

Tours can be booked by going to
the Toyota website at
<http://www.tourtoyotaindiana.com/plant-tours/>

Grazing Bites by Victor Shelton

Yes, it appears that we are trying to having an early spring, but I refuse to count those chicks before they hatch! Abnormally warm weather in February and early March is not that uncommon here in Indiana; unfortunately, neither are late March and early April snows. The accumulated growing degree days so far this year, on average across the state, are higher than normal.

Now, it is REALLY early still, but I know how some think about ANY new green growth in the pastures. Let's think this through. Grazing too early in the spring (technically not spring yet either) does nothing but remove the solar panel the plants need to start building sugars and growing new roots. The forages really need to be able to canopy and get a good start before animals start removing that new growth otherwise production will be reduced.

I know sometimes the hay is not the best quality. Better to supplement poor hay and keep feeding it, if available, than to start grazing too early. . . Now I say that somewhat tongue in cheek. Sometimes you want to set the stand back a bit to removed some competition. Such would be the case where you have frost seeded clover into the field. This would only be a factor if it was not grazed down tighter at the end of the previous grazing season or as dormant stockpiled forage. If it was grazed down close before; especially if grazed down before going dormant last fall, then you don't want to graze it close again. Just utilize it in the normal rotation.

Fields that were grazed down tight last fall or over winter as stockpiled forage will not have adequate amount of standing dry matter; i.e., fiber available, and will for sure not be the best fields to start grazing early anyway. Those field will lack sufficient fiber to go with all the washy high water, high protein forage that will come on with first growth. All ruminant livestock need to balance the carbon nitrogen ratio in their rumen to maintain that mat. If they don't, then they will not perform the way we want them to; i.e., less gain, less milk production. It just goes through them faster than they can effectively utilize it . . . You know what that mean. I've said it several time . . . Don't stand too close behind those cows!

If you would look at the manure consistency during that time period, it is probably very thin, almost watery, not that pudding consistency that is ideal for the rumen. Fields that do not have adequate dry matter to go along with the lush new growth will need to be supplemented to keep the animals in balance. This is a good time period to put out some low quality hay, baled corn stalks or even straw. If they need it, they will eat it.

I would hope you have been able to keep at least one or two fields with some stockpiled forage for early spring use. Stockpiled forages left from the previous season mixed with that new growth grass makes for a nicely balanced sward for growing in the spring and a really nice place to calve. No or minimal mud, and good quality balanced forage to eat. If you have neve tried it, you will wonder why you hadn't after doing it.

This is normally one of my favorite times of the year to build fences. We often get nice breaks in the weather, so not too hot or cold and soil conditions are usually very good for pounding posts. If you are in the early stages of doing some divisions and want to keep some flexibility, then utilize longer linear fences dividing bigger areas into longer, narrower fields which can be easily subdivided down with temporary fence into whatever size is needed or cut for hay if that is what you want or need to do.

Now is a good time to get those soil tests done. Of course, if you haven't taken any for awhile, then it is even a better time. They will pull pretty easy right now and you should have plenty of time to get them sent in and get results back in time to apply any needed nutrients before the real growing season.

It is extremely difficult to maintain a stand of quality forages that will produce quality, nutritious feed without adequate soil fertility levels. Everyone has tried it, but you soon see that by 'getting by' with lower levels of nutrients; especially phosphorus and potassium, you are just that , 'getting by', but with lower yields, lower quality forages, and lower carrying capacities. Just like an annual field crop, your forage crop needs to be fertilized and managed. Once the field has moderate or better levels of fertility, it is easy to maintain it there if it is only used for grazing. Any mechanical removal removes nutrients that will have to be replaced. Graze as much as you can and hay as little as you can; especially land that is hard to get fertilizer equipment on.

March, 2017



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Rental Equipment Available at Dubois County SWCD

• **No-Till Drill**

Great Plains No-Till drill has a seeding width of 10 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.*

• **Stapler**

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.*

• **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.*