



Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District

1486 Executive Blvd. Suite A • Jasper, IN 47546

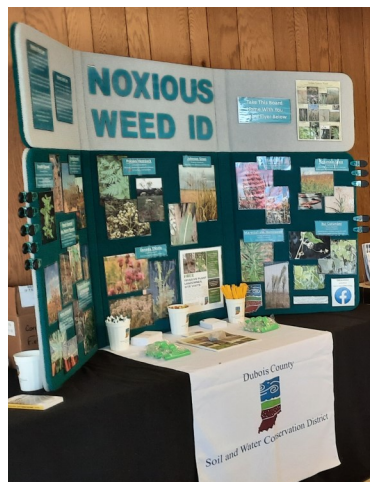
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Summer, 2022

The Conservation Conversation

Vibrant Summer of Outreach

What a summer it has been here at the Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD).



From the vibrancy of summer cover crops at the Land Stewardship Initiative (LSI) to lots of educational outreach, let's look back at what we've been up to in just a few short months.

Our summer kick off was all about educating the community about noxious weeds at the Dubois County 4-H Fair. Both SWCD staff and SWCD Supervisors were present each evening, discussing what to look out for and what steps can be taken.

July was awash with color. After the fair Invasive Species Awareness Coalition (ISAC) of Dubois County and the SWCD hosted a prairie walk at the Jasper Parklands. Native plant experts Will Drews (Knox County SWCD), and Samantha Dame (Natural Resource Specialist, USDA NRCS) led a guided nature walk discussing the native plants growing in the Parklands. The City of Jasper Parks and Recreation Department discussed the history

of the property and how they turned a former golf course in to a rich ecological landscape.



Summer cover crops really hit their stride at LSI. Buckwheat and sunflowers dominated the early landscape. Sunflowers have deep branched tap roots and help to improve the soil. Their large leaves provided great weed suppression. As the summer progressed it was all about the Sorghum Sudangrass.

This plant is known for its height and large biomass and came to dominate the landscape. Sorghum Sudangrass also has great value for livestock forage and when this drought tolerant plant breaks down its roots will help to increase the soil's organic matter.

As summer came to an end, our Sorghum Sudangrass grew to over 9ft tall. Fall cover crops were planted into the live standing grass with a front end loader being used to lay down the exceedingly tall stems.

If you would like to see what we have accomplished, discuss the bio mass and organic matter and compare 10 years of a no till cover crop system versus a traditional tillage system then you're in luck. November 15th we are planning a field day to discuss this in detail. More information coming soon.



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Vibrant Summer of Outreach...continued from page 1

As things started to heat in August we certainly didn't slow down. We kicked things off with the Soil Health Expo. Dubois SWCD joined seven other southwest Indiana SWCDs to host the event at the Toyota Event Plaza in Gibson County. We brought in high profile soil health advocates who gave producers a new look at soil health, as well as a trade show. The event was free to attend and PARP/CCH credit was available for the event.



Exactly one week later we partnered with three other SWCDs to host our tri-annual Greener Pastures Field Day at Steckler Grassfed farms. As the sun set on this beautiful southern Indiana August evening, attendees settled in to listen to our keynote speaker, NRCS Retired Agronomist/Grazing Specialist Victor Shelton who spoke about "Soil Life & Grazing Effects." Keep an eye peeled for information about our next Greener Pastures Field Day in 2025 when Dubois will be the host county!



Just as August came to an end, SWCD Resource Specialist Melissa Ruschau and NRCS Soil Scientist Travis Gogel traversed the county collecting soil texture samples to provide to our local soil judging teams.

We found ourselves running head-first into September with no signs of slowing down. We started with an Invasive Control Training for Landowners which was held at the

Southern Indiana Purdue Agriculture Center (SIPAC). The first part of the day was held classroom style and the second half was in the field, obtaining first hand knowledge of the many different methods used to control invasives...including goats!

Just one week later you found us working the Dubois County ISAC and Forestry booths at the Ferdinand Folk Fest. We experienced a lot of interactions with the community and unveiled our new herbicide treatment for cut stump educational display and flier, see page 4.



And finally, we ended September by assisting the Jasper Library's kick off event for Homeschool Connections. Students rotated stations between each SWCD staff member, taking a deep dive into water conservation and the importance of keeping our water clean.

If you have an event that could benefit from our involvement, either as an informational booth about local conservation efforts or assisting in an educa-

tional event about conservation and the environment, then contact our office to start a conversation.

For a full recounting of our 2022 activities check out our annual report, published as an insert to the Ferdinand News in February 2023.



UPCOMING EVENTS



Invasive Species Awareness Coalition 2023 Planning Meeting

MONDAY NOVEMBER 14TH 6:00 PM
JASPER LIBRARY HICKORY MEETING ROOM

JOIN US AS WE REVIEW OUR 2022 ACTIVITIES
AND START MAKING PLANS FOR 2023.

CONTACT EMILY FINCH 812-482-1171 X3
EMILY.FINCH@IN.NACDNET.NET



Southwest Indiana Agriculture Economic Summit

Thursday, November 10th
8:30am-12pm ET
VUJC CTIM Building
Boxed Lunch Provided

Agenda

- 8:30am Networking & Coffee
- 9am Opening Remarks, Ed Cole
- 9:05am Energy Improvements to Farm Buildings, Scott Wagner NRCS
- 9:30am Precision Lighting Systems (LED), Danny Cross
- 10am Break
- 10:15am VUJC Ag Class Update, Christian Blome
- 10:30am VUJC Land Stewardship Initiative Update, Dubois SWCD Resource Specialist Melissa Ruschau
- 11am Carbon Credits & Soil Resiliency, Hans Schmitz
- 11:45am Lunch & Networking

RSVP

812-482-9650

sgray@duboisstrong.com

SAVE THE DATE

FEBRUARY 20-21, 2023

HEART OF AMERICA GRAZING CONFERENCE

FERDINAND COMMUNITY CENTER
FERDINAND, INDIANA

FEATURED SPEAKERS:

DR. GREG HALICH
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

DR. ALAN FRANZLUEBBERS
USDA-ARS NORTH CAROLINA

MR. JOHNNY ROGERS
COORDINATOR,
AMAZING GRAZING PROJECT,
NORTH CAROLINA STATE
UNIVERSITY

**AND SEVERAL LOCAL
CELEBRITIES TOO!**

TOPICS TO INCLUDE:

BALE GRAZING

**SOIL SCIENCE AND SOIL
HEALTH**

**THE POWER OF MANAGED
GRAZING**

**GRAZING OPTIONS WITH
SMALL RUMINANTS**

**SHARED EXPERIENCES
FROM SEASONED
GRAZERS**

MORE INFORMATION WILL BE POSTED ON
INDIANA FORAGE COUNCIL WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK PAGE
WWW.INDIANAFORAGE.ORG

Organized in partnership by:



Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service
is an Affirmative Action, Equal Access/Equal
Opportunity Institution.

Cut-Stump Herbicide

Control Invasive Trees, Shrubs & Vines!

Cut-Stump Herbicide

Cut-stump herbicide application is a **targeted** way to control invasive or unwanted **woody vegetation** and **prevent the plants from resprouting**.

Herbicide use: These recommendations are a general guide and do not constitute an endorsement of a particular herbicide product. Always read and follow all label instructions before applying any herbicide product.

Created by: the **Daviess-Dubois-Martin Invasive Plant Partnership**, with funding from Clean Water Indiana. Photo Credits: Emily Finch; PlayCleanGo; James Miller, USDA FS, Bugwood.org.



What Herbicide Do You Use?

Several **concentrated herbicides** can be used, check the label to see if the product can be applied straight or must be diluted in water or oil first.

Look for products with **at least 20% glyphosate** or **at least 8% triclopyr** active ingredient on the herbicide label. Picloram and 2,4-D products can also work, but picloram may cause off-target damage.

How do you Apply it?

1. Pour herbicide into a **small spray bottle or herbicide dobber**, along with a marking dye (optional). Dilute if needed (see label).
2. **Right after cutting**, apply the herbicide to the cut surface. On small stems cover the entire surface, on **large stumps** apply only to the **outer edge of the trunk** (about 1 inch)
3. **DO NOT apply** during **spring sap flow**, or if **rain** is expected in the next 4-6 hrs.
Temperature restrictions: For water based herbicides do not apply below freezing, for oil based herbicides do not apply on hot days (above 85-90 degrees)



For more control info, visit
www.woodyinvasives.org/management

Biodiversity Increases the Success of Most Agricultural Systems.

Biodiversity helps to prevent disease and pest problems associated with monocultures. Using cover crops and increasing diversity within crop rotations improves soil health and soil function, reduces costs, and increases profitability. Diversity above ground improves diversity below ground, which helps create healthy productive soils.

Cover crops can be an integral part of a cropping system. Cover crops can be managed to improve soil health, as they help to develop an environment that sustains and nourishes plants, soil microbes and beneficial insects.

Cover crops are typically planted in late summer or fall around harvest and before spring planting of the following year's crops. Examples of cover crops include rye, wheat, oats, clovers and other legumes, turnips, radishes, and triticale. Planting several cover crop species together in a mixture can increase their impact on soil health. Each cover crop provides its own set of benefits, so it's important to choose the right cover crop mixture to meet management goals.



Cover Crop Benefits



Restoring Soil Health – Cover crops help increase organic matter in the soil and improve overall soil health by adding living roots to the soil during more months of the year. Cover crops can improve water infiltration into the soil. Deep-rooted crops like forage radishes create natural water passages. Legume cover crops serve as natural fertilizers while grasses scavenge nutrients that are often lost after harvest or during winter.



Natural Resource Protection – Along with crop residue above ground, cover crops protect the soil against erosive heavy rains and strong winds. Cover crops trap excess nitrogen, keeping it from leaching into groundwater or running off into surface water – releasing it later to feed growing crops.



Livestock Feed – Cover crops can provide livestock producers with additional grazing or haying opportunities.



Wildlife Habitat – Cover crops provide winter food and cover for birds and other wildlife. During the growing season, they can provide food for pollinators

Soil Health Management Systems

Implementing Soil Health Management Systems can lead to increased organic matter, more soil organisms, reduced soil compaction and improved nutrient storage and cycling. As an added bonus, fully functioning, healthy soils absorb and retain more water, making them less susceptible to runoff and erosion. This means more water will be available for crops when they need it. Soil Health Management Systems allow farmers to enjoy profits because they spend less on fuel and energy while benefiting from the higher crop yields resulting from improved soil conditions.

Contact your local NRCS office to learn more about Soil Health Management Systems and the technical and financial assistance available to help “Unlock the Secrets in the Soil.”

You can download this handout at www.nrcs/usda.gov.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Victor Shelton Grazing Bites

Some people try to make pasture management a lot more difficult than needed. I think sometimes it is more about how it is perceived in the eyes of the beholder. Some might think that a pasture that is grazed evenly to the ground, all the time, means that no forage was lost – no. Some might think that mowing it frequently and making it look like a prime horse pasture behind a fancy fence is ideal – maybe. It is really about the management of the forage to achieve the goals of production, forage quality and numerous added benefits that benefit erosion, soil biology, and usually also wildlife.

Anytime you can keep something simple it is usually best. I've been to several events this summer and had similar questions asked to me that can be summed up as, "What are the basic rules of good pasture management?"



Manage the forage you have; consider fall planted annuals and stockpiled forages and prepare for winter!

I find myself repeating some things. That repetition is perhaps needed from time to time, but I don't want to be redundant either. I am reminded occasionally to just keep it simple. How exactly do we keep it simple? Follow a few simple rules.

- 1) Keep the soil covered with live plants – by doing so, erosion will be kept in check and the soil will be cooler, which is better for most forages and for reduced evaporation. You don't want to see any bare soil. Bare spots allow for increased evaporation, warmer than ideal soil conditions and space for opportunist weeds.
- 2) Maintain a good solar panel – which means, it takes grass to grow grass. We have to try and keep enough green plant leaves for photosynthesis, converting light energy into chemical energy. If the plants have been eaten down too much, energy for new growth is forced to come from stored energy in the roots if available, which is usually slower than photosynthesis. Like you have heard me talk about lots of times – don't graze or rather don't let the livestock graze closer than 4 inches for most cool season grasses and not closer than 6-8 inches for most warm season grasses. That is of course, the shortest forages left, not the tallest. If you are leaving at least 4 inches, there will be quite a bit of forage left that is actually taller.
- 2) Provide adequate rest before grazing it again. Everything needs rest, including forages. By maintaining good residual heights or stop grazing heights, regrowth is generally quicker especially with adequate moisture. The plant needs enough time to regrow and express itself again before the next grazing event. Multiple removals during a short time frame or continual removal weakens the plant and actually reduces production. It also reduces new root growth and lowers drought tolerance. So, grow it, graze it, then rest it - it is that simple.

We want the forage to be growing and producing abundantly, and as much as possible in a stage and quality that is best for the ruminant livestock grazing it. The livestock know what forage is noteworthy and will seek it out first. If it is the quality they need, they will eat it readily and without hesitation – definitely a desirable species in the eyes of the consumer. When we let these same forages mature too much, which does happen, then forage quality is reduced along with intake. A small amount of the sward reaching maturity isn't that bad. It can help to build deeper roots, increase soil organic matter from increased amounts and turnover of roots, and help bring up nutrients and water from deeper in the soil profile. This is especially valuable to soils that could use some additional organic matter.

Lastly, when possible, graze the paddock in a manner that will leave nutrients in place and replace as needed. Smaller allocations tend to have less nutrient transfer than the grazing of large pastures. This is especially true when there is a long walking distance to water, mineral and/or shade. Isolated areas without one or more of

Victor Shelton Grazing Bites

the mentioned will be grazed for a shorter period and the ruminating and resting periods afterwards rarely occurs there unless forced to. This process therefore slowly moves nutrients from one spot to another as manure is more likely to be deposited on the more frequently used areas. Enough with that for now, grow it, graze it, rest it. Maintain cover, don't over graze it, let it grow back before grazing it again.

You're starting to run low on time to get fall annuals planted. The earlier they are seeded the more growth and grazing potential they will provide. My favorite mix is spring oats, a brassica such as radish, rape, or turnips, and cereal rye. The oats grow fast with ample moisture, yield well and can make some very decent hay or grazing throughout the fall. The brassica is a nice addition and is readily consumed by most grazing livestock. The cereal rye will come on stronger later and will overwinter and provide good cover for the next growing season and perhaps even some early spring grazing if soil conditions are favorable. These annuals can help improve soil health, build organic matter, reduce some weeds, and be forage too. Other fall-seeded options would include crimson clover, winter peas, triticale, wheat, barley or multiple combinations. You can't graze it if you don't plant it.

It is also time to start assessing your winter feeding needs and supply. Consider how much livestock will be overwintering, how much they will be consuming and what they will be eating. Fall pasture, stockpiled forages, crop residues and annuals, and stored feed, such as hay, silage, or baleage should all be accounted for and prepared.

If you haven't started stockpiling any forage yet, now is the time to do so. Tall fescue stockpiles better than any other forage which is one of its best attributes. It holds quality longer than almost any other perennial forage. Grazing annuals or cover crops now will provide additional rest and growth for perennial pastures which can then be grazed later this winter.

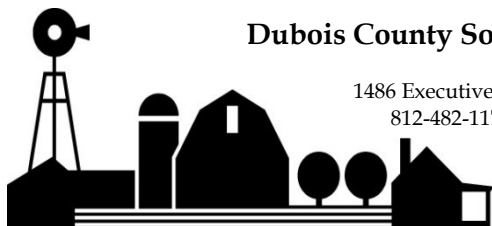
I'm not sure that I like the forecast that I've seen so far for the upcoming winter, and I hope they are mistaken, but either way, we need to be prepared and ready. Remember, it's not about maximizing a grazing event, but maximizing a grazing season! Keep on grazing!



Victor Shelton is a retired Agronomist/Grazing Specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). He continues to write Grazing Bites in his spare time from his property in southwest Indiana.

Reminders & Opportunities More pasture information and past issues of Grazing Bites are available at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/in/technical/landuse/pasture/>

Grazing Bites has changed. Please send comments or questions to grazingbites@gmail.com.



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Melissa Ruschau, Resource Specialist
Emily Finch, Invasive Species Specialist
Jessica Condra, Administrative Assistant

Partnership Staff

Samantha Dame, NRCS District Conservationist
Andrea Gogel, ISDA DOSC

Rental Equipment Available Dubois County SWCD

No-Till Drill—\$10 Per Acre, \$100 Minimum

Great Plains No-Till drill has a seeding width of 7 feet, and can be used to plant soybeans, wheat, legumes, grasses, etc. It can also be used to plant native or warm season grasses.

No-Till Seeder—\$10 Per Acre, \$100 Minimum

Great Plains 9' No-Till Seeder

Stapler/Staples—\$10/Rental fee, \$50/box of 1,000 staples.

This stapler is for erosion control blankets. The plunger simply pushes the staples into the ground. Buy staples and the stapler rental fee is waived.

Spinning Jenny—No Rental Fees.

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.

Tile Flags—\$7.00/bundle of 100.

Flags on 36" wire staff can be used to mark underground power lines or surveying jobs.