



Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District

1486 Executive Blvd. Suite A • Jasper, IN 47546

812-482-1171 x3 • www.duboisswcd.org

Summer, 2017

The Conservation Conversation

LSI Update

In very late April, Dubois County was hit by an extreme weather event. Some areas in the county received up to 10 inches of rain overnight. Roads were flooded, streams and rivers were up over their banks, and farmers who had recently planted their crops were unsure how their fields were going to react to the waters.

On the cropland managed by SWCD on VUJC, some of the fields received about 6 inches of rain overnight and approximately 4 more inches fell in the following days. The challenge was that the fields were planted only two days before the extreme weather event. The longer it remained cold and wet in early May, the more concern there was. The first plants emerged around May 10th and appeared overall that the fields fared well. Field #1 which is directly across the street from Bohnert Park was under at least a foot of water overnight.

It was three days before the field was dry. But no top soil was lost. The cover crops that were planted last fall armored the soil and protected it from washing downstream.

The photo at the bottom of the page was taken in Field #2, LSI's largest crop field. It shows the stark side-by-side difference in corn population between the tilled strip and no tilled cover crops. In the tilled strip the heavy rains caused the top of the soil to crust over and prevented corn from emerging. Weeds also had a easier time emerging from the tilled side where there was no cover to prevent them. The areas that were not tilled definitely handled the extreme weather better. Three days after the storms, Melissa Ruschau, LSI Project Technician, walked the fields sinking 3 inches in the tilled strips. Her footsteps were barely noticeable when walking on the cover crop residue. *Learn more about cover crops and advance soil health by contacting your local SWCD office.*



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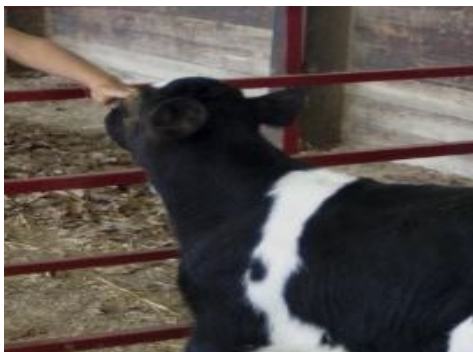
*SWCD Staff
& Rental Equip-
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Food and Ag Day

Purdue Extension held its annual Food and Ag Day at the Dubois County 4-H Fairgrounds in May. Over 560 students toured the many different booths throughout the day camp. This program is designed to introduce students to the role agriculture plays in their daily lives, gives the students a chance to see animals up close, and learn where food products originate before they arrive in the grocery stores.

Partnering with Purdue Extension during this day camp was Dubois County Soil and Water with conservation bingo; Purdue Extension Gibson County with a climate presentation; Farbest Farms with turkeys; Neukam Farms with beef cattle; Summerlot with goats; Hopf Equipment with tractors; Bowlin family with pigs; Schwoeppe Farms with dairy cows; Indiana Farm Bureau with popcorn; Superior Ag with a corn presentation and drone demonstrations; volunteers making butter; and Oeding family with sheep.

New this year was an evening session for families



Family Nature Fest

The Southwest Indiana IASWCD Forestry Committee and IDNR Division of Forestry sponsored the 5th annual Family Nature Fest on Saturday, April 22nd at the Ferdinand State Forest. Due to inclement weather this year, the Family Nature Fest was held in the campground shelter house.

Included this year's activities was a wood cookie stamping activity by the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District staff; a snake presentation by Lincoln State Park Naturalist, Michael Crews; a forest management tour; an opportunity to hand saw logs; and a free continental breakfast. Smokey the Bear was on hand to take pictures with the families and help the families plant trees in a forest management area. Door prizes were awarded.

The Family Nature Fest program promotes education for natural resource concerns and conservations practices.



Poison Hemlock



Along the ditches, fencerows, grass pastures, hay fields, and railroad right of ways in our community, you are likely to see poison hemlock in bloom this time of the year. Poison hemlock is a biennial plant having fern like leaves. This means that it lives its life over two years. In the first year, poison hemlock 's leaves form a basal rosette. In the second year, it will produce small white flowers arranged in umbrella-like clusters. In contrast, wild carrot has one dense flower cluster on a narrow, hairy stem, usually with one small purple flower in the center of the white flower cluster and is usually 3 feet tall or less. The easiest way to tell the two plants apart is that poison hemlock will have purple spots or blotches on its smooth (hairless) ridged stems while wild carrot stems will usually be covered with hairs.

Poison hemlock is acutely toxic to people and animals, with symptoms appearing 20 minutes to three hours after ingestion. All parts of the plant are poisonous and even the dead canes remain toxic for up to three years. The amount of toxin varies and tends to be higher in sunny areas. Young leaves in the spring are the most toxic and the root the least toxic while the fruit (seed) is most dangerous in the fall. For both people and animals, quick treatment can reverse the harm and typically, there are no noticeable aftereffects. Eating the plant is the main danger, but it is also toxic to the skin and respiratory system. When digging or mowing large amounts of poison hemlock, it is best to wear gloves and a mask or take frequent breaks to avoid becoming ill. Individuals can have reactions when pulling plants due to toxins absorbed into the skin.

Control of poison hemlock is more effective in the first year of its life cycle. Herbicides provide control but caution needs to be taken. Please read and follow the herbicide label.

The Duck Race and Conservation Partnering

On May 22nd, 2018, Old Jasper Day was sponsored by the Jasper Lions Club and the Jasper Chamber of Commerce at the Riverwalk. Among the many family oriented fun activities were Spirit of Jasper train rides, horse-drawn wagon rides, grinding corn at the Jasper City Mill, face painting, a Historical Walking Tour, visiting the Schaffer Historic Barn watching the art of making beer from local experts, eating wonderful strawberry treats and other food, listening to the concert at the gazebo, and the Patoka 2000 Duck Race. Judi Brown with the Dubois County SWCD, led the volunteers to run the Duck Race.



Acting NRCS Chief, Leonard Jordan; Chris Lee, Princeton CDT Team Leader; Jane Hardisty, State Conservationist; and Kevin Wickey, Central Regional Conservationist.

SW Indiana was host to senior leadership in USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on Monday, June 12th. Acting Chief, Leonard Jordan was accompanied by Regional Conservationist, Kevin Wickey and Jane Hardisty, Indiana State Conservationist. They came to SW Indiana to learn about the unique delivery structure that is being utilized in Indiana and how technology is used to create efficiencies

that enable staff to increase the amount of conservation being applied to the land. In Indiana, the District Conservationist plan and organize best management practices with each producer to resolve any and all resource concerns present on their land. Once these measures are planned, they are then sent to one of either Conservation Delivery Teams that will conduct surveys, design, and construction as needed. These either teams utilize the very latest technology including GPS Survey and the newest supporting software. Indiana has created this way of doing business to be able to respond quickly to changing workloads and priorities and apply more conservation in the most efficient manner possible.

Luna Moth, Awards, and Upcoming Events

By the front office door of the Dubois County SWCD, perched a Luna Moth. Found in North America, the Luna Moth begins its life as a very hungry caterpillar. Newly hatched caterpillars eat constantly on the leaves of walnut, hickory, sweet gum, and paper birch trees. After about a month of eating, the caterpillar builds a cocoon.

The insect lives inside the cocoon for three weeks before emerging as a moth. The large, green moth is highly recognizable moth. Another interesting aspect of the Luna Moth is that the insect doesn't have a mouth or digestive system. It only lives for about a week after leaving the cocoon without ever eating.

Although they don't have an appetite, they are a favorite snack for bats. To protect themselves from these predators, the moths spin in circles which sometimes causes them to lose their wingtips as seen in the picture below. This spinning motion disorients the bats so much that the moths are often able to make a getaway.



Important Dates to Remember

Dubois County 4-H Fair—July 17th—20th

Indiana State Fair—August 4th-20th



Justin Bary, Dubois County SWCD,
Chad Mundy, City of Jasper Stormwater,
and
Carla Striegel-Winner with
Dubois County Solid Waste Management

On May 12th, three Dubois County offices were recognized for their part in making the county a better place to live and work. Their combined efforts in the first annual Creek Sweep which was held in October of 2016, helped improved the local water quality. Staff from each of the three county offices honored and approximately fifteen volunteers removed approximately 3,000 pounds of debris from four area waterways.

The second annual Creek Sweep is now being planned. *If you are interested in helping this worthwhile cause, please contact the SWCD office at 812-482-1171, ext #3.*

Grazing Bites by Victor Shelton, May, 2017

I can't believe how much forage growth we have already had this year. It seems early, but it is only about 10 or 12 percent ahead of last year now. I've already heard from a few people asking the best way to try and keep it under control. My wife, who is a bit vertically challenged, already thinks it is getting tall when she had to move or put up a new stretch of temporary fence. With warmer days and certainly no shortage of water, forages are growing fast and do appear out of control!

You will probably note, as you walk or drive your ATV around the fields, that there may be differences in growth. The reasons for those differences can vary but include irregularities in fertility, last autumn's stop grazing heights, soils, compaction, rest after grazing, and the forages themselves. I don't have time to cover all of those today, but will cover what I can. One of the problems, with quick, early growth, if you want to consider it a problem, is competition. If you have over seeded or frost-seeded legumes into the pasture, you need to somewhat keep their competition at bay. Those fields need to be grazed enough to keep existing forages, mainly grass, from competing too much with legume seedlings for light. All of this can be accomplished by keeping the livestock moving and not staying in any paddock too long. If the paddock was grazed down tighter last fall, especially pre-dormancy, then that will help.

If you don't like weeds, and I'm not especially fond of some of them, competition is really a good thing and an excellent tool to help control them. The more you keep the ground covered and maintain enough growth to help prevent new weeds from emerging, the more control you will have on them. Good healthy growth and cover is always a good thing, so maintain that cover and don't overgraze. Keep at least three to four inches of growth at all times on most cool-season forages; that's the shortest height you leave behind, not the tallest! Most forages have already surpassed normal start grazing heights (6-8 inches for most tall cool season grasses; such as, fescues and orchardgrass). Having a good root base, which starts the previous fall, and maintaining adequate residual is important to protect the soil from excessive compaction, especially when you are having as much rain as some areas have been getting lately. More growth and more residual, means more resilience. Dang, I've already gotten off on a tangent.

Okay, getting back to controlling runaway grass! There is some advantage to grazing early as long as you use some "animal" control, especially in a rotated grazing system. Starting early and making sure to maintain minimum grazing heights for the forages is really the critical issue, but it also helps to keep the forages from getting too far ahead of you before you graze them again. Staging forages helps you keep more of the paddocks in better condition longer, with less need of haying or clipping. These fields that had more rest and more leftover forage will be ready earlier and the tighter grazed fields will be ready later. I would still promote grazing for short periods, keeping the animals moving and never grazing closer than 3-4 inches whenever possible. If the forages start getting ahead of you, consider making the paddocks slightly larger and grazing the areas for shorter periods of time letting the animals top graze to help slow down the seed head production some. The goal should be to maintain as much pasture as possible in what I've referred to in the past as "staged 2" growth; quality vegetative leafy growth prior to seed head production. This quality forage with good intake will ensure good growth on growing animals, milk for lactating animals, and also help to flatten the growth curve some, providing quality forages a little longer into the season. Any field that has to be "skipped" can be clipped for later use, cut for hay, or baled, or left as is for maintenance animals. You need to try and keep the paddocks as vegetative as possible for growing animals. If you wait too long to re-graze them you may get frustrated quickly in trying to play catch-up. It's better to skip one and deal with it later. Not applying too much fertilizer, especially nitrogen, in the early spring will help keep this furious growth under a little more control.

Quite often there is not set ideal grazing pattern or set timeframe in trying to maintain quality forages. It is instead rather more of a game with changing rules, tactics, and plays to try and overcome the challenges of the season. Every year is different. We need to be prepared with more than one tool in the tool box. When forages are growing fast, rotate fast. When forages are growing slower, graze slower. Maintain as much as possible in vegetative form and deal with the excess wisely. Keep on grazing.

For the complete Grazing Bite article by Victor Shelton, go to <http://www.nrcse.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcse/main/in/technical/landuse/pasture>



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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.*