Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Summer, 2016

The Conservation Conversation

Maintaining Practices for CRP

CRP cover maintenance is the participant's responsibility. Participants shall maintain practices, according to the conservation plan without cost share assistance. NRCS or a Technical Service Provider (TSP) shall work with participants to plan appropriate maintenance practices, such as mowing, spraying, or prescribed burning in a logical and practical manner.

A TSP is an individual certified to provide technical assistance on behalf of USDA. Technical assistance includes conservation planning and design, layout, installation, and checkout of approved conservation practices.

All practices necessary for the successful establishment and maintenance of the approved cover shall be included in the conservation plan and agreed to by the participant. Maintenance practices shall meet CRP and participant's objectives.

Participants shall ensure: that adequate approved vegetative cover is maintained to control erosion; compliance with State noxious weed laws, if applicable, as determined by the State or local noxious weed commission; control of other weeds that are not considered noxious; and that undesirable vegetation, weeds (including noxious weeds), insects, rodents, etc., that pose a threat to existing cover or adversely impact other landowners in the area are controlled.

All CRP participants with contracts effective beginning with signup are required to perform at least one management activity as part of their approved conservation plan.

This management activity shall be designed to ensure plant diversity and wildlife benefits, while ensuring protection of the soil and water resources. Management activities are site specific and are used to enhance the wildlife benefits for the site. Management activities must be completed before the end of year 6 for contract with a 10 year contract length or before the end of year 9 for contract with a 15 year contract length. In no case should the one required management activity occur during the last 3 years of CRP contract.

Additional management activities may occur up to year 8 for 10-year contracts and year 13 for 15 year contracts. Thinning may be used as a management activity in any year provided no cost-share is paid. Failure to perform planned management activities can result in contract violation.

NRCS or TSP shall work with participants to plan appropriate management activities, such as, light disking, interseeding, tree thinning, and other components applicable to the practice which will create plant diversity for the benefit of wildlife and enhancement of the permanent cover.

Participants are responsible for fire management on CRP acreage. Barren firebreaks shall only be allowed in high risk area, such as transportation corridors, rural communities and adjacent farmsteads. The designated conservationist shall document in the contract support document that there will not be an erosion hazard from the barren firebreak. If erosion becomes a problem, remedial action shall be taken.

Excerpts taken from the FSA Handbook

Contents

Front Cover
CRP Practices

2
Family Nature Fest

3
Staff Activities

4
ISAC

5
INfield Advantage

6
Grazing Bites

7
Urban Stormwater Runoff, American Chestnut Program

Back Cover
SWCD Staff , Upcoming Events

The Family Nature Fest was held on April 16th at the Ferdinand State Forest. Many of the outdoor activities were arranged in and around the Tulip Shelter house. This event encourages families to get out into nature and educates them through fun activities on forestry, forest management, and forest products.

Judi Brown, has participated in this event every year since it began four years ago.

Two girls study the display of the tree rings.

Sawing a log with a cross cut saw.

Families planting a tree.

Staff Activities

Judy Brown volunteered at the 2nd annual Career Exploration Day held at Pike County High School on Wednesday, April 6th. This event is hosted by Junior Achievement of Southwestern Indiana, Inc. and is a way for high school students to explore and become interested in different career choices. This year almost 650 students participated.

SWCD and NRCS staff were on hand to answer questions at Career Exploration Day at Pike County High School.

SWCD Board of Directors and staff are shown working on the SWCD Strategic 5-Year Plan during an evening SWCD Board meeting. The Strategic 5-Year Plan is available online if anyone would like to receive a copy.

All ages watched the Patoka 2000 Duck Race at the Riverwalk during Old Jasper Days. Judi Brown and Patti Schroeder volunteered at this fun event.

Invasive Species Awareness Coalition of Dubois County

A new group of local residents was formed recently to combat the ever-growing problems of invasive species in Dubois County. This group is called Invasive Species Awareness Coalition of Dubois County or ISAC for short. Invasive species are plants that are not native to our area and tend to spread so that native vegetation cannot flourish. ISAC Dubois County focuses on identification, public awareness, mapping, and eradication of invasive species in Dubois County. The group is made up of concerned landowners, nature enthusiasts, public lands managers, and natural resource professionals.

For more information call Ron Rathfon, Purdue Extension Forester at 812-678-5049 or contact him at ronr@purdue.edu

ISAC volunteer, Dave Altman talks to interested people at the Riverwalk during Old Jasper Days.

On May 7th, ISAC volunteers tackled invasive plants at the Jasper Riverwalk.

INfield Advantage

INfield Advantage (INFA) is a program available to Indiana crop farmers and has been enrolling participants and their corn fields in the 2016 program. Infield Advantage provides the landowner the opportunity to gather and analyze personalized, field-specific data. This year the program covers about two-thirds of the state with 35 local groups. Each local group is organized by a local contact person, either an ISDA Division of Soil Conservation Resource Specialist or a staff person from one of the other Indiana Conservation Partnership organizations. With each group enrolling between 10 and 20 growers, INFA anticipates over 400 growers participating in the program this year, up from last year's 350. This year's anticipated growth will expand the number of acres where the growers are using INFA tools to monitor their nitrogen use efficiency to over 70,000 acres. Program tools can test the corn stalk nitrate levels and determine nitrogen use efficiency at the end of the growing period. Program registration continued through June for most of the state.

INFA this year includes a pilot program with Indiana Pork. Indiana Pork is offering their producers, and anyone who applies hog manure, the chance to use INFA's tools to monitor how these fields are using nitrogen to produce a successful corn crop. The pilot project expands the traditional INFA program by offering additional testing during the growing season and the chance to participate in a winter grower meeting where all the growers share a consistent management practice. The winter grower meeting is what sets INFA apart from a grower collecting their own imagery and testing results. Aerial imagery observes fields from above to discover possible issues including soil compaction and equipment malfunctions. At the meeting, the small local group's participants have a chance to discuss and compare their results between themselves with guidance from an agronomic consultant. Each meeting includes two presentations, the first covering general information and a second with related Purdue University research, followed by discussion time for the growers.

INFA is available to Indiana producers at no additional charge through the support of the Indiana Conservation Partnership and Indiana Corn and Soybean checkoff. The Indiana Pork Project has additional support from Indiana Pork checkoff.

For more information, contact Andrea Gogel, ISDA Resource Specialist, at 812-482-1171, ext. 133 or agogel@isda.in.gov.

It would be nice some year to have an average spring; trouble is, I 'm not sure what that is anymore. I've seen a fair amount of hay being cut; some has gone through several wash cycles. I think every producer stresses over making hay, at least part of the time. I'd rather leave the forage standing than have poor quality hay.

Let's ponder two questions in this issue, "To bale or not bale?" and "Should I put up hay or just buy what I need?" I think everyone, no matter how efficient or type of grazing system, should have some hay on hand. It is your insurance plan; one of your contingency plans. Feeding less hay is a good thing though, at least it should be –meaning that you are hopefully grazing more.

Smaller operation, especially ones with less than 15 cows or equivalents would have difficult time justifying owning hay equipment. That depreciating investment would probably be best spent on improving the grazing efficiency of the farm or on fertility. I have to be careful here not to step on toes, but I 've seen people buying a lot of hay equipment so they can stop buying hay and perhaps even 'sell' some hay. While they really could have gotten away from using very little hay, they have spent their money on iron and then often mine their soils to help pay for that equipment. . .Can you really sell that hay for enough to replace the nutrients and pay for labor and equipment? Not likely.

If you are in what I will refer to as a 'building' stage of soil fertility—in other words, it still needs some, then you would be better off bringing in fertility, i.e., hay, than to remove it. This is true even if you are not selling it and utilizing it yourself. You are still most likely removing nutrients from where they are needed and moving them to a 'feeding' area where they are already high. Moving those 'feeding' areas around some will certainly help, but still the more you can graze, the better.

If fields are in that 'building' stage, it is counterproductive to cut hay off it—no question. You are just removing and moving needed nutrients—especially phosphorus. Let's look at the cost for just a moment and compare it to grazing. If you look at nutrient removal between the two scenarios—grazing an orchardgrass/clover mix pasture or haying this same field. . . Assuming the nutrients are actually present; the grazing cost of nutrient removal is about $2.50 per ton dry matter produced. Hay cost from nutrient removal with the same nutrient values is about $40 per ton assuming that no or minimal nitrogen was applied and most nitrogen was supplied by the legume. So my question is, do you still want to cut hay off that field? Smaller operations are almost always better off buying what hay they need. You don't have to fight the weather and you can actually shop around and buy good quality hay—often cheaper than you can raise it.

Except for some drought years, there is usually hay around to be bought. Plan ahead if you are going to be buying and if possible, visit the hayfield from which your hay will come ahead of time so you have a better idea of the quality. If purchasing hay already baled or sight unseen, request a hay analysis to make sure it is the quality needed to meet your livestock's nutritional needs just to make sure it really will beat 'snowballs.' If you are cutting hay, don't forget to get a soil test at least every 2-3 years and re-apply needed nutrients to grow more quality forage.

Urban Stormwater Runoff and American Chestnut Program

Stormwater runoff is the rain and snowmelt that flows off impervious surfaces; such as, streets, roofs, parking lots, sidewalks, and other compacted land surfaces. Stormwater runoff is not clean water. As it flows across land surfaces, it picks up pollutants; such as, soil, litter, pesticides, fertilizers, grass clippings, leaves, pet waste, road salt, oil, automotive fluids, and other toxic chemicals from leaks and spills. The runoff flows into storm drains, entering our storm sewer system or directly into local lakes, streams, rivers, or wetlands. During a heavy rain, the capacity of treatment plants can be exceeded, causing untreated sewage and stormwater to overflow. The pollutants carried by stormwater runoff can contaminate local streams and rivers.

Many everyday activities around our home have the potential to contribute to polluted stormwater runoff. Improper use, storage and disposal of harsh household chemical, careless trash disposal, home improvement projects, excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides, lawn care, pet care, and do it yourself auto care and maintenance are just a few ways people can add to the pollution flowing into our local waterways. This polluted stormwater runoff entering our local streams and rivers can have lasting health, safety, environmental, and economic impacts on our watersheds and communities.

Reducing stormwater pollution can be done by any and all of the following practices: properly store and dispose of all household chemicals; Use a snow shovel or blower instead of salt/ice melt to clear sidewalks and driveways in the winter; choose water based paints instead of oil based paints; dispose of cooking fats, oils, and grease in the trash instead of down the drain; use a compost pile for leaves, grass clippings and garden waste; minimize fertilizers and pesticides; clean up and dispose of pet waste; repair all automobile leaks promptly; recycle used motor oil and antifreeze; clean up spilled brake fluid, oil, grease, and antifreeze with kitty litter or sawdust and then dispose in trash., inspect the septic system every 3 years, and don't dispose of household waste in sinks or toilets.

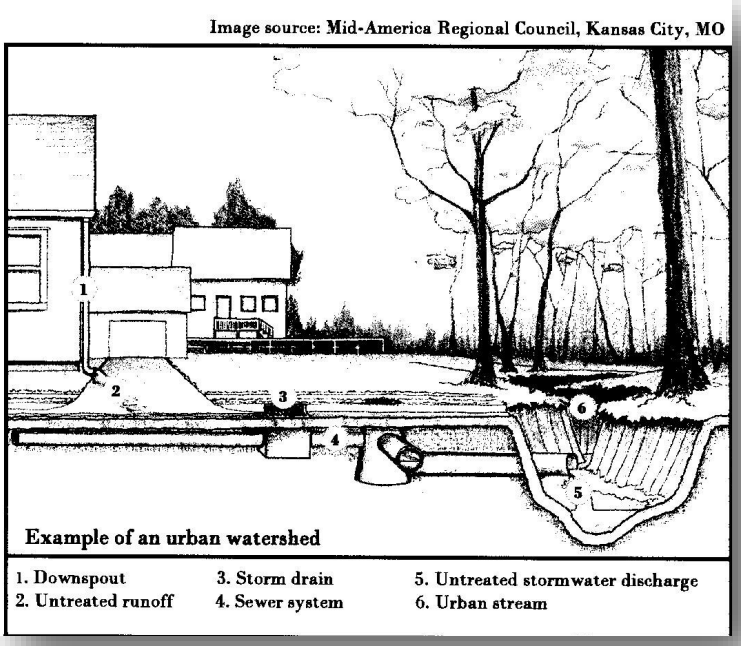

Illustration of Urban Stormwater Runoff

American Chestnut Program at SIPAC

Ron Rathfon, Purdue Extension Forester, announced in mid-April that only two blocks of chestnut seedlings were received to be planted at SIPAC in the American Chestnut program which started in 2009. Instead of using volunteers, a skid steer with hydraulic auger was used to drill the planting holes.

This program's goal is to help with research that will lead to the development of a blight-resistant American chestnut tree and to reintroduce a population back into the forest ecosystem.

For more information on this program, call Rathfon at 812-678-5049 or contact him at ronr@purdue.edu.

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For address corrections or to be taken off the list, please contact the office by email at patti.schroeder@in.nacdnet.net or call 812-482-1171 x3

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Dubois County 4-H Fair, July 19-23

Indiana State Fair, August 5-21

Patoka Clean-up Day
Hoosier Hills Marina
Saturday, August 27th
8am-1pm ET, 812-685-2447

The 10th Annual Nature Daze
Camp Rancho Framasa, Nashville, IN,
Saturday, September 10th, 9am-3pm