

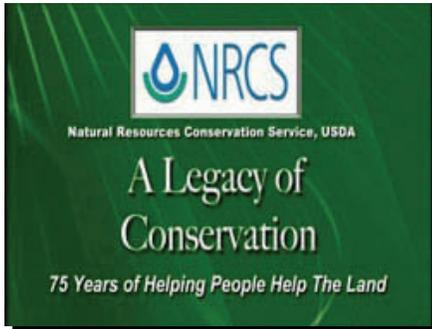
Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District

1486 Executive Blvd. Suite A • Jasper, IN 47546
812-482-1171 x3 • www.duboisswcd.org

July 2010

The Conservation Conversation

A Conservation Legacy Reaching Back to 1935



2010 marks the 75th anniversary of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the beginning of the federal commitment to conserving natural resources on private lands. Originally established by Congress in 1935 as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), NRCS has expanded to become a conservation leader for all natural resources, ensuring private lands are conserved, restored, and more resilient to environmental challenges, like climate change.

Seventy percent of the land in the United States is privately owned, making stewardship by private landowners absolutely critical to the health of our Nation's environment. NRCS works with landowners through conservation planning and assistance designed to benefit the soil, water, air, plants, and animals that result in productive lands and healthy ecosystems.

Science and technology are critical to good conservation. NRCS experts from many disciplines come together to help landowners conserve natural resources in efficient, smart and sustainable ways. Whether developed in a laboratory or on the land, NRCS science and technology helps landowners make the right decisions for every natural resource. NRCS succeeds through partnerships, working closely with individual farmers, landowners, local conservation districts, government agencies and many other people and groups that care about the quality of America's natural resources.

Here in Dubois County, NRCS provides conservation assistance in the form of various Farm Bill programs that provide incentive payments to landowners who wish to install good conservation practices on their land. Through programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, or EQIP as it is commonly known, Dubois County land users have installed water and sediment control basins (dry dams), grassed waterways, grade stabilization structures, cattle crossings, fencing and rotational grazing systems just to name a few.

In the words of the first NRCS Chief, Hugh Hammond Bennett – *"If we take care of the land, it will take care of us."*

**The Dubois County SWCD
congratulates NRCS on 75 years
of outstanding conservation
stewardship to our nation!**



Here's What's Inside This Issue!



- Alien Invaders Taking Over Landscape 2

- Soil Quality Conference 3
- Dubois County SWCD Needs Your Help!
- Need to Install a Conservation Practice?
- Conservation Items Available for Rent

- Do You Have Erosion Problems? 4
- We've Joined the Community Foundation
- Forestry & Wildlife Field Day

- Grazing Bites 5
- What's Wrong with Topping Trees? 6

- Bring Birds to Your Backyard 7
- Where Are We Located? 8
- When Are We Open?

FSA Acreage Reporting

Deadline July 15

Accurate acreage reports are necessary to determine and maintain eligibility for the various 2008 Farm Bill programs. Acreage reports are considered timely filed when completed by the applicable final crop reporting deadline. **The deadline for Spring seeded crops and CRP is July 15.**

For answers to your questions, please contact the Dubois County FSA at 482-1171 x2.

Alien Invaders Taking Over Landscape

Kudzu. The vine that ate the south. Who hasn't heard of this climbing vine that chokes out all of the vegetation around it? It is a plant that is not native to the United States, but was introduced for a good purpose: to combat soil erosion. Since then, it has grown out of control and is smothering native plants in many southern states, and has begun to get a foothold in southern Indiana. Kudzu acts as a winter host for Asian soybean rust, which could have a negative effect on local agriculture.

Think Kudzu or other exotic invasive plants don't affect you? Think again! These plants are all around you, and private landowners and agencies spend hundreds of thousands of dollars each year trying to control their spread. When the exotic invasive plants take over an area, the native plants that normally grow there slowly die off. When the natural plant community changes, the wildlife that thrives in the area also dies off or moves elsewhere as their food and shelter sources disappear. In forests, the timber growth is affected or even eliminated. This also changes the available habitat for the wildlife, and will greatly impact the amount of income landowners can expect from their timber. Agriculture is no exception: the introduction of exotic invasive species will reduce the farmer's bottom line, which will be felt by all food consumers. With the potential negative effects on our natural landscape, wildlife, timber industry, and food supply, the spread of exotic invasive species is something we should not be taking lightly!

According to The Nature Conservancy, invasive species have contributed directly to the decline of 42% of the threatened and endangered species in the United States. The annual cost to the United States economy is estimated at \$120 billion a year, with over 100 million acres (an area roughly the size of California) suffering from invasive plant infestations.

Examples of exotic invasive species include ornamental pear trees (yes, that pretty flowering tree found in many front yards!), Japanese stiltgrass, Multiflora rose, Periwinkle, Crownvetch, Purple loosestrife, Burning bush, Tree of heaven, and English ivy. Planted any of these in your yard? Many people have, and the plant can spread to neighboring areas, and become a nuisance plant.

Invasive species are species that grow rapidly, spread and take over areas. Exotic plants are plant species that are introduced from other areas or countries. These species do not have natural restraints, so they are able to reproduce and spread rapidly. They tend to grow more quickly than the native plants, green up earlier in spring, stay green later in the fall, and outcompete the native plants for sunshine and water. Some of these species alter the soil structure, further inhibiting the native plants ability to survive. Finally, some also introduce chemicals into the soil around their roots which kill any plants growing close by. The native or slower growing plant species do not have a chance to outcompete these plants, which is why the invasive species are so successful in taking over an area.

What can you do to stop the spread of invasive species? Learn to identify the exotic invasive plants. Remove any known invasive plants from your yard, garden, or woodlot. This could take several years, as these plants are very aggressive growers. And when you are choosing plants for your yard, choose native plants. Some native flowers include Butterfly weed, (not Butterfly bush, which is an invasive species!), Prairie blazing star, and Black eyed susans. Native trees include Redbud, Smooth hydrangea, and Fragrant sumac. A complete listing of native plants and photos of the plants can be found at the Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society's website at www.inpaws.org. If your favorite yard and garden center does not stock native plants, encourage them to do so. Everyone can play their part by not purchasing the exotic invasive species to plant in their yards, gardens, and woodlots.

For information about invasive species, visit these websites:

- The Nature Conservancy at www.tnc.org
- Southern Indiana Cooperative Weed Management Area at www.fs.fed.us/r9/hoosier/docs/plants/sicwma.htm
- The Midwest Invasive Plant Network at www.mipn.org

Contact the Soil and Water Conservation District at (812) 482-1171 extension 3 for more information, including landowner invasive species information packets.



Examples of invasive species include Kudzu (shown above) and ornamental pear trees (below).



We've Joined the Community Foundation

If you've benefited from the conservation assistance you have received from the SWCD, this is your chance to give back!

The Dubois County SWCD has established an endowment with the Dubois County Community Foundation. The community foundation is a publicly supported nonprofit organization which accumulates funds through contributions or bequests. These funds are invested to produce income that is then distributed for the charitable needs of the community.

The SWCD's endowment will be used to fund special projects and programs of the SWCD. Your financial support in any amount to help meet our goals is greatly appreciated. Please utilize the coupon below to make a fully tax deductible donation to support your SWCD.

Do You Have Soil or Water Erosion Problems?

If you have soil or water erosion problems on your land, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has Farm Bill Programs that may be able to provide you with needed assistance.

To determine which programs might be right for you:
Contact Bart Pitstick, NRCS District Conservationist at 812-482-1171, extension 3 today!

We will discuss your needs and come up with a customized solution that is right for you!



**Dubois County Soil and Water
Conservation District Endowment**
of the Dubois County Community
Foundation, Inc.

Please accept my donation of

In memory of

In honor of

Name

Address

**Please make checks payable to
Dubois County Community
Foundation, Inc.**

Forestry & Wildlife Field Day

Saturday, October 9th

10am

**on the Stan & Dan Wehr Farm
on Pilot Knob Road in Crawford County**



Learn About:

- ◆ **Timber marketing**
- ◆ **Timber stand improvement**
- ◆ **Food plots**
- ◆ **Controlled burns**
- ◆ **Managing wild berries**

TOTALLY FREE! LUNCH PROVIDED!

For more information and to register,
contact the Lincoln Hills RC&D at
812-649-9136 x5

Grazing Bites

by Victor Shelton, NRCS Grazing Specialist

The past week or so I've sure seen a lot of hay being cut; some even went through some wash cycles. I too had some down and had planned on baling it up in small bales until rainy looking weather made me as nervous as a long tailed cat in a room of rocking chairs, so it quickly got rolled up. I think every producer stresses over making hay at least part of the time.

I'm often asked the questions, "to bale or not bale" or "should I put up hay or just buy what I need"? Good questions. I think everyone, no matter how efficient or type of grazing system, should have some hay on hand. It is your insurance plan; your contingency plan. Feeding less hay is a good thing though, at least it should be – meaning that you hopefully grazing more.



Smaller operations, 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 now try and 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 somewhat 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, 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. 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.

Enough on the hay thing...had several questions on mowing heights or clipping heights for pasture. Most tall cool-season grasses like tall fescues and orchardgrass would ideally be clipped right at leaf height removing present or emerging seed stems. If these have been grazed in a manner where the stand is very uneven, then slightly lower might in order to help to even out the stand and encourage under grazed areas. Perennial ryegrass, bluegrass and reed canarygrass would benefit from similar conditions, but of course will be shorter than the previously mentioned species to be best. Warm season grasses such as switchgrass or big bluestem should not be clipped closer than 6-8 inches from the ground, preferably higher.

I have to ask the question though, what is the reason for your mowing? If it is to improve or maintain quality – have at it – just don't mow any shorter than necessary. If it is purely for aesthetics – you might be better off leaving it alone. Taller forages produce more live roots providing some drought insurance; can help to shade out some weeds; can provide for slightly cooler soils and maintain moisture which can promote more growth from cool season forages instead of less desirable plants and then the added benefit of some wildlife habitat. Fast grazing over a paddock while the seed heads are still in the milk stage or at least still green can top these paddocks just about as good and if you tread some forage into the ground in the process, that's ok too, it will be used to grow more. Quality drops as the plant matures, but a few seed heads is not that bad; cutting too short and then turning hot and dry is typically worse.

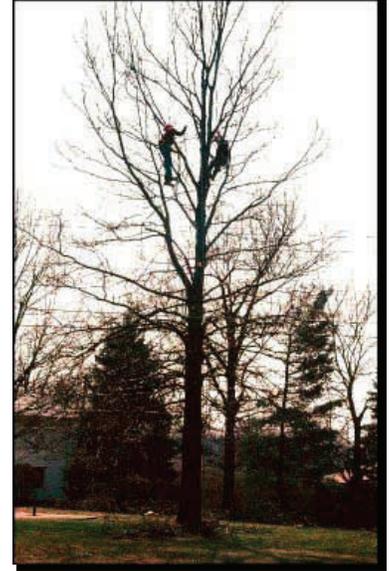
What's Wrong with Topping Trees?

What is topping and why are trees topped?

Topping is the drastic removal or cutting back of large branches in mature trees. The tree is sheared like a hedge and the main branches are cut to stubs. Topping is often referred to as heading, stubbing, or dehorning. Many homeowners have their trees topped, when their trees reach heights they consider unsafe. They fear a strong wind might blow these large trees over. A fear largely unjustified, for the extensive root system of a healthy tree, left undisturbed, provides adequate support for the tree.

Eight Reasons Why You Shouldn't Top Your Trees

1. **Starvation.** Trees need leaves to manufacture starches during photosynthesis. A tree's transport system moves starches from the leaves to the roots. Topping, however, removes so much of the leafy crown that a tree may be unable to provide the roots with this necessary product. This in turn prevents the roots from growing and transporting nutrients and water to its leaves. The tree starves. Good pruning practices rarely remove more than 1/4 to 1/3 of the leafy crown.
2. **Shock.** The tree crown acts like an umbrella, shading the bark from the direct sunlight of summer. Sudden removal of the leafy protective layer exposes the bark to sunscald. Neighboring trees used to shady conditions, may be adversely affected. Poor health and death often occur.
3. **Insects and disease.** Large wounds resulting from tree topping have difficulty closing. The location and size of the cuts prevent the tree's natural defense system from functioning. The stubs are open wounds that invite insect invasions and the spread of decay fungi. If decay is already present in the limb, cutting will only speed the spread of decay.
4. **Weak limbs.** Many new limbs sprouting from the cut of the larger branch are weakly attached to the parent branch. Growing limbs attach to the larger branch with layers of wood that overlap year after year. Limbs gradually enlarge with the parent stem. Limbs growing from large cut areas develop from that point only and not as an extension of the entire parent branch. In some instances, the attachment to the parent stem involves less than one inch of wood.
5. **Rapid new growth.** People believe they need to top their trees to control the height and spread of a tree. Actually, the opposite happens. Trees respond rapidly to the injury by producing many, long sprouts. The result is a tree that quickly regains the height it once had; it becomes bushier.
6. **Tree death,** Some species of trees do not tolerate topping. Beeches, for example, sprout little after a severe pruning. The resulting lack of foliage severely reduces the tree's ability to capture sunlight and turn it into glucose. It will likely lead to the death of the tree.
7. **Ugliness.** A topped tree is a disfigured tree. Even with regrowth, it never regains the grace and beauty of its species. The landscape and the community are robbed of a valuable asset.
8. **Cost.** A chain saw and a truck are not all that's needed to properly prune a tree. Topping may reduce cost and time for the moment, but the actual costs can be seen in:
 - a. Reduced property values
 - b. Removal and replacement cost when the tree dies
 - c. Loss of other trees and shrubs that succumb to the changed light conditions
 - d. Risk of liability from weakened branches
 - e. Increased future pruning costs



A well pruned tree will extend the life of your tree and add more value to your home.

Story courtesy Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service, Publication FNR-FAQ-14-W. For more information contact the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, Purdue Extension Office at 765-494-3583 or find them on the web at <http://www.agriculture.purdue.edu/fnr/index.html>

Bring Birds to Your Backyard

Wherever you live, you can bring comfort to wildlife and joy to your own life by offering a bit of habitat to nature's creatures. With the right plants for food and shelter, you can attract spring and fall migrating birds as well as those that might stay year round.

Add water and, if you happen to live on an acreage where you have ample space, you can do wonders for birds, butterflies and your own disposition.

Natural Food or Feeders

Fruits, nuts, and seeds from trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses will attract a variety of birds. Look to plant those that offer the food the bird species likes that you want in your yard. The same is true for feeding stations; the location, feeder style and food type will determine the birds that visit.

To attract the greatest variety of birds, use a station with a variety of feeder types, such as gravity-fed cylinder tubes, hopper boxes, platforms and suet feeders. Position them at different levels. Offer millet for ground feeders; black oil sunflower and thistle for finches, and peanut and suet for woodpeckers. Locate the station feeders next to natural cover such as evergreen shrubs or trees. The feeders should be clean with fresh food or seed.

Open Water, Birdbaths

Most birds need open water for bathing, drinking and controlling their temperatures. A small backyard pond or a birdbath will do the job. The sound of flowing water attracts birds, so a fountain or small waterfall will increase your chances to bring birds to your back yard.

Cover: Natural and Manmade

The same trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses that offer food to your backyard birds can offer them cover. The birds use that cover for escape, roosting, nesting and rearing their young. Another option is to build or purchase birdhouses designed for specific species of birds, with the opening size critical.

Backyard Booklet Available

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has a well illustrated, full color 28-page booklet available on backyard conservation available at no charge. It contains names of trees, shrubs, flowers and foods that attract birds. It is available by calling 888-LANDCARE. You can also download the booklet to your computer by accessing www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard

Wildlife Ways

Did you know...

Hummingbirds, the smallest birds in North America, are the only birds that can fly backwards. Their wings are adapted to helicopter-like flight-- a circular whirl that allows them to hover, move ahead, sideways or backward.



Goldfinches are sociable and will visit backyards in numbers to eat thistle and sunflower seeds. Use a feeder specifically designed for thistle seeds for finches.

For more information on backyard conservation techniques, visit the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute's website at:

www.whmi.nrcs.usda.gov



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The Conservation Conversation

OFFICE HOURS: MON-FRI 8 AM TO 4 PM

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NEWSLETTER**

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Brenda Sermersheim, Vice Chair
Greg Hoffman, Member
Glenn Menke, Member
Sam Oxley, Member

SWCD Associate Supervisors:

Jim Hochgesang, Duane Hopf
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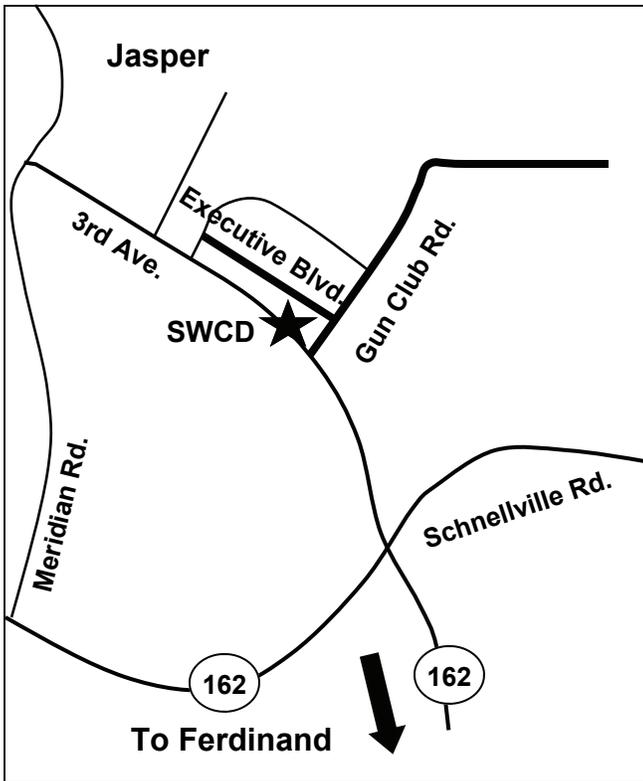
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For address corrections or to be taken off the list, please contact the office by email at michael.wilhite@in.nacdn.net or call 812-482-1171 x3



Where Are We Located?

- We are located at the corner of Executive Blvd. and Gun Club Rd. in Jasper, just north of the intersection of Schnellville Rd. and State Rd. 162.
- Our office is the door on the right as you come toward the building.

When Are We Open?

- We are open between the hours of 8am - 4pm Monday - Friday. Due to the nature of the work performed by the Service Center Staff, occasionally there are times when no one will be in the office. Please call before making a special trip to the office.

ALL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF THE DUBOIS COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT ARE OFFERED ON A NONDISCRIMINATORY BASIS, WITHOUT REGARD TO RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, RELATION, SEX, AGE, MARITAL STATUS, OR HANDICAP.