



DUBOIS COUNTY CONSERVATION NEWS

Dubois County
Soil and Water Conservation District
June 2009

Lange Farms Receives Conservation Farmer of the Year Award

Richard, Kenny, and Jim Lange of Lange Farms Inc, have been awarded the 2008 Otto J. Bauer Memorial Outstanding Conservation Farmer of the Year Award. They all work full time on the farm, which has been in their family for over 100 years. Kenny is practical about their approach to managing their land. He says, "We do whatever we see that needs to be done!" He does not feel that they do anything different than the rest of the local farmers when it comes to their farm management practices. But Kenny is very pleased with the conservation practices that they have completed on the farm through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Kenny said, "When I walk on the farm, every now and then I just stop and admire how nice it looks! Man! Putting in the waterway was the ticket to getting rid of that ditch!"

The Lange's farm is located near Ferdinand. They raise turkey and beef cattle, corn, soybeans, and forages. They actively practice rotational grazing, livestock exclusion, and nutrient management practices. Bart Pitstick, District Conservationist for the NRCS, said "The Langes make stewardship of the land a priority. They have worked hard to prevent soil erosion, and improve their forage quality and water quality."

Over the years, they have partici-

pated in USDA Farm Bill programs, including EQIP. Their conservation accomplishments include: tile and underground outlets, water and sediment control basins, grassed waterways, forest stand improvement, heavy use protection areas, cattle watering facilities, a waste storage facility, and fencing.

The Langes have changed their farming practices as technology has improved. The fields are now 100% no-tilled Kenny said, "When we were in the process of installing the waterways and other practices, I would tell people about the work we were doing. Now, I tell people we should have done it 10 years ago. People really need to use these conservation practices on their farms as they can. As farmers, it's our job to save and improve the land for future generations."

Kenny likes to visit other farms to see what they are doing, and bring ideas home to their farm.



Preston Weisheit presents award to Richard and Kenny Lange

That is why the Langes were willing to host a conservation tour last fall for the Dubois County SWCD.

Kenny said, "Other people could see some of the work we have done, and take the ideas home and apply them to the lay of their land." He added, "We shared our ideas with Bart Pitstick, and he put them in our conservation plan. Now they are on the ground."

Kenny is a member of the Dubois County Cattleman's Association, and a past treasurer for the Dubois County Farmer's Union. Richard is a past director of the Farm Bureau Co-op.

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 was a member of the SWCD board from 1969 until 1986. Preston Weisheit, of Old National Bank, sponsor of the award, presented the award at the SWCD annual meeting.

Delbert Himself, Jr. and Brent Wening Named River Friendly Farmers in 2008



The Indiana River Friendly Farmer program was initiated in 1999 as a statewide initiative recognizing farmers who, through good production management, help keep Indiana's rivers, lakes and streams clean. The purpose of the River Friendly Farmer award is to publicly recognize and reward farmers who do an excellent job of managing their farms in an economically and environmentally sound way that protects and improves Indiana's soil and water resources for future generations.

Since 1999, over 400 farmers across Indiana have been publicly honored at the Indiana State Fair for their stewardship. Eight of the 400 have been from Dubois County, including our 2008 awardees: Brent Wening and Delbert Himself, Jr. Nominees for 2009 have been submitted to the awards committee. For more information on how to apply for the River Friendly Farmer award or to nominate a landowner in Dubois County, contact the SWCD at (812) 482-1171 Ext. 3.

Brent Weisman
(left) accepts his
River Friendly
Farmer sign from
Jim Verkamp,
Indiana Farm
Bureau Inc.



Delbert "Junie" Himself
receives his River Friendly
Farmer sign at the SWCD
Annual Meeting.

River Friendly Farmer
award recipients receive a
certificate, ribbon, and shirt
at the Indiana State Fair.
They are also awarded a
sign to post on their farms.

Colt VanNatta, (left) former Du-
bois County Livestock Special-
ist, is now the NRCS District
Conservationist in Fayette
County. He presented a River
Friendly Farmer sign to Bart
Pitstick, Dubois County's
District Conservationist. Bart
received a River Friendly Farmer
award in 2007 for his work on
his Fayette County Farm.



SWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Alan Weyer, Chair

Glenn Menke, Vice Chair

Jack Welp, Member

Sam Oxley, Member

Brenda Sermersheim, Member

*Contact one of these county officials
with your conservation questions,
comments, and concerns!*

Associate Members: Duane Hopf,
Donovan Brunsman, Lee Schnell,
Jim Hochgesang, Greg Hoffman

Service Center Staff:

Amanda Bough

SWCD Resource Specialist

Radius Weisman

SWCD Technical Specialist

Judi Brown,

SWCD Executive Director

Michael Wilhite,

SWCD Program Assistant

Bart Pitstick,

NRCS, District Conservationist

SWCD BOARD MEETINGS

The Dubois County SWCD
Board of Supervisors meets on the
first Thursday of each month. The
meetings begin at 7:00 PM Nov.
through March, and 7:30 PM April
through October, and are located in
the in the USDA Service Center in
Jasper IN. Anyone interested in
local soil and water conservation
issues is encouraged to attend.

**The Dubois County Soil
and Water Conservation
District promotes to all
citizens - both agricultural
and
non-agricultural -
the vital benefits of
protecting and
preserving natural
resources, especially soil
and water.**

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.

Kyle Gutsell Awarded First Place at SWCD Public Speaking Contest

Kyle Gutsell, a class of 2009 senior at Forest Park High School, was selected as the top speaker at the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District's annual public speaking contest. Second place honors were awarded to Patrick Jensen.

Kyle is the son of Bernie and Theresa Gutsell. His future plans include attending Ivy Tech and majoring in industrial technology, and returning to the family farm and possibly taking part ownership of the business. Throughout high school he maintained a 3.95 GPA and was an active member in numerous clubs and activities.



Kyle Gutsell

Patrick Jensen, a native of Denmark, was an exchange student in the junior class at Forest Park. His parents are Michael and Annette Jensen, of Oelstykke, Denmark, which is just outside Copenhagen. Upon his return to Denmark, Patrick will be attending a technical college named Roskilde to study carpentry and woodworking.



Patrick Jensen

The contestants spoke on the contest theme of "Protecting Wildlife Habitat in Dubois County". All students enrolled Dubois County high schools are eligible to participate, and high school aged home schooled stu-

dents are also eligible. The speeches were judged on content and organization, and presentation.

Kyle said, "participating in this contest has helped me both financially and academically, by improving my knowledge of soil and water conservation. Our environment's health is a vital part of our lives, and everyone should take pride in the world we live in." Kyle was presented a \$200 US Savings Bond upon being named the top speaker.

The public speaking contest is an annual event where local teens can hone their public speaking skills while learning more about natural resource issues. Contest sponsors include the City of Jasper, Psi Iota Xi Sorority, Iota Lambda Chapter, Ferdinand, and the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District.

American Chestnut Plantation Started at Southern Indiana Purdue Agriculture Center

A tree that once dominated the forests throughout the eastern United States is being brought back one slow step at a time. A group of volunteers gathered at the Southern Indiana Purdue Agriculture Center (SIPAC) in March to plant what researchers hope will be the beginning of an American Chestnut seed orchard.

The American Chestnut tree was known for its nuts (as in the famous Christmas song), rot-resistant wood, and sheer size. It was eliminated from the landscape in the early 1900s by an introduced Asian fungus known as the chestnut blight.

Researchers have cross-bred the American Chestnut with the blight resistant Chinese Chestnut and have developed a breed of American Chestnut that is 94 percent pure. The newly planted trees at SIPAC are as close to the former American Chestnut as it gets. Any closer, and they too would be eliminated by the blight. Once they reach a certain age, the trees will be inoculated with the fungus. The goal is for some of the trees to survive, meaning they are resistant to the blight. The surviving trees will become a seed orchard: the first step in reintroducing the American Chestnut to the forest landscape.

For more information about this project, contact Ron Rathfon, SIPAC Forester, at (812) 678-5049.



Interested in Resource Conservation?

Have you been looking for a way to get involved in natural resource conservation in Dubois County? The SWCD has formed several committees, and any interested resident is welcome to participate. Spots are open on the soil and water and forestry committees, and interested persons can commit as little or as much time as they have in their schedule.

Soil and Water committee chair is Alan Weyer, and projects in the planning stages include a fall grazing tour. Forestry committee chair is Jim Hochgesang; upcoming projects include a panel discussion about the benefits of forest management. New ideas are welcome!

For more information contact the SWCD office or any committee chair.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP helps promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. EQIP activities are carried out according to a plan of operations developed in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practices to address the concerns.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

CRP provides technical and financial assistance to eligible farmers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers CRP, and NRCS provides technical assistance, land eligibility determinations and conservation planning. CRP encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as grassed waterways and filter strips. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the contract.



Commonly Implemented Conservation Practices Include:

Cover Crops
Stream Crossings
Grassed Waterway
WASCOB (Dry Dam)
Spring Development
Waste Storage Facilities
Forest Stand Improvement
Rotational Grazing Systems
Grade Stabilization Structures

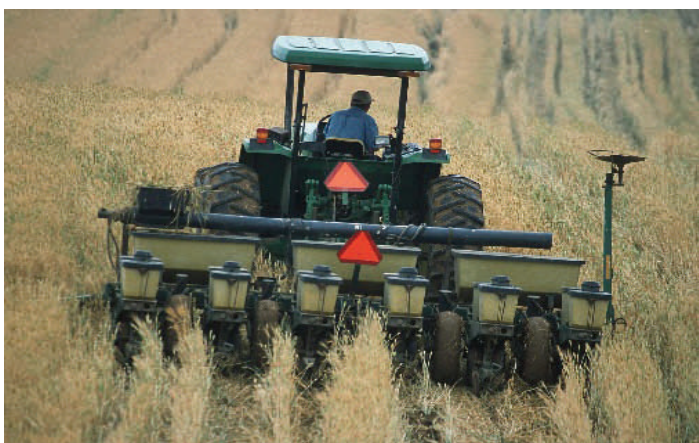


Above: WASCOBs (Water And Sediment Control Basins), commonly called Dry Dams, trap sediment and excess water for a 24 hour period. Vertical riser pipes (like the one shown here) drain water directly to a subsurface tile at a measured rate.

Right: A No-till Drill plants corn into a cover crop. The SWCD has a Great Plains No-till Drill available for rent to plant cover crops for \$7 per acre.

Above Right: A Waste Storage Building is a fabricated structure for the temporary storage of animal waste or other organic agricultural waste.

Top Right: A Rock Chute serves as a grade stabilization structure at the end of a grassed waterway to prevent erosion from moving upstream.





Could these innovative practices benefit your farm?



Cattle Watering Systems

Top Left: Watering systems pump water from a nearby pond or holding tank into a basin with an automatic float device which keeps the water level even at all times. Watering systems are commonly used in rotational grazing practices, where cattle rotate from one paddock to another every few weeks to prevent overgrazing in each pasture.

Heavy Use Area Protection

Bottom Left: Heavy Use Area Protection systems seek to protect heavily used areas against erosion resulting from lack of ground cover, which in addition to manure management concerns could contribute to water quality and livestock health concerns. Heavy Use pads are commonly used around livestock feeding systems and generally consist of a rock sub-layer below dirt or grass. Heavy Use pads can also be used around watering facilities and on frequently used trails for livestock travel between rotational pasture systems.



Animal Mortality Facilities

Below: Animal Mortality Facilities provide an effective means for the disposal of animal carcasses. The facilities also aid in reducing the odor caused by Mortality and provide a cost-effective way of producing natural fertilizer.



**Get more
information
or enroll in
Farm Bill
programs!**

**Bart Pitstick
District Conservationist**

**To call for an appointment:
812-482-1171, Ext. 3**



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC

Dubois County Landowners Use State Grant for Conservation Practices

In 2008, \$1.19 million in Emergency Conservation Assistance Program (ECAP) funds was awarded to 35 Soil and Water Conservation Districts who were the most severely affected by the unusual amount of rainfall and flooding during the spring. The Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District received an allotment of \$72,062.40.

ECAP funds were awarded by the Indiana State Department of Agriculture to these counties to assist landowners with unexpected repairs to their crop fields caused by the heavy rain events.

The SWCD Supervisors were

allowed the flexibility to assess the local needs, and set the ground rules for the funds. Based upon local resource needs, the Supervisors allocated Dubois County's funding for the removal of trees and driftwood from crop fields, and to repair eroding ditches. Funding availability was announced through press releases and personal contacts to landowners. After these funds were committed to the applicants, the remaining funds were utilized in a cover crop program. Cover crops are sown on crop fields during the winter to help control soil loss. They also reduce nutrient loss, and improve soil and water quality. A

total of 745 acres in Dubois County was sown to cover crops in this one-time cost share program. Finally, incentive payments were offered to local livestock owners who were forced to pump their lagoons multiple times to keep them from overtopping.

The State Department of Agriculture and the SWCD moved quickly to get the funds into the hands of the landowners as a quick fix for resource concerns caused by the rainfall and flooding.

For more information about this program, or long term solutions to erosion concerns, contact the SWCD office at (812) 482-1171, A



Ditch stabilization accomplished through the use of ECAP funds.

Soil Information is as Close as Your Computer

The Web Soil Survey provides ag producers, Technical Service Providers, and others electronic access to soil and related information to make land-use and management decisions. Soil data can be analyzed in four basic steps. Full soil survey report content can be found at: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>.

The SWCD still has a good supply of printed soil surveys available for county residents. Stop by the office to request a copy, or pick one up at our booth at the Dubois County 4-H Fair.

SWCD Good Financial Return for County

The Supervisors of the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District presented a summary of the conservation accomplishments of the SWCD to the County Commissioners and Council. Each County tax dollar invested in the SWCD returns \$18.28 from state, federal, and other local sources.

The Supervisors and SWCD staff utilize grants and local sponsorships to better assist county landowners with conservation projects. Cost share and technical assistance for these conservation projects is provided through the USDA Farm Bill, and appropriations and grants from the State of Indiana. The investment made by local landowners is also

taken into consideration.

Utilizing grant funds has allowed the SWCD to provide increased conservation assistance to county landowners and residents through the addition of staff and equipment. The SWCD Supervisors continually strive to sustain or increase this level of service through additional grants, appropriations, and sponsorships.

The conservation accomplishments of the SWCD also assist the local economy through the sales of conservation related materials by local vendors, and the use of local contractors. The bottom line is an improvement to water quality, which benefits all residents.

Melvin Sermersheim Named 2008 Indiana Master Farm Conservationist of the Year

Georgina and Melvin
Sermersheim



“Nothing would have been more rewarding.” This is how Melvin Sermersheim describes his years on his farm located near the Dubois County Fairgrounds. Melvin’s care of the land he farmed since 1957 was recognized, when he was presented the 2008 Master Farm Conservationist of the Year Award at the Indiana Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Conference in Indianapolis.

This award is a lifetime achievement honor for men and women who have dedicated their farming careers to preserving and protecting Indiana’s natural resources. It is sponsored by Indiana Prairie Farmer Magazine. Tom Bechman, Editor of the Prairie Farmer Magazine, presented the award to Melvin and four other recipients from around Indiana.

Melvin grew up on a small farm outside of Ireland, Indiana. Farming was something he always wanted to do while he was in school. When he purchased his first 80 acres, the soil had eroded and growing crops was difficult. Melvin described his early operation as more livestock than row crops. He said that helped the soil fertility. As he added more land to his farm, Melvin worked gradually to improve the conditions. He said, “On one 18 acre tract, we used a dozer

and high lift for two weeks to eliminate some of the ditches. You could have put a car in the ditch and not found it!” With a laugh, he adds “it was in pretty bad shape.” He said he had to work hard to make his crops successful.

Melvin discovered an added benefit to removing the gullies from his fields. He said once the fields were level, it was like adding acreage. He could crop the entire field, instead of driving around a gully.

Melvin took an innovative approach towards his farming practices. He was the first farmer in Dubois County to use no-till, which he began using in 1971. His crop fields continue to be 100% no-tilled, which leaves very little ground unprotected from the erosive action of rain. Melvin also used crown vetch on an experimental basis in place of nitrogen fertilizer. The corn crops were no-tilled into the stand of vetch, which further acted as a barrier to protect the soil. He uses a wheat cover crop on all of the bean fields. His farming practices allow him to crop some very rolling ground without fear of ditches forming.

Melvin kept the conservation practices installed using

USDA cost-share funds in good repair over the years. He also installed additional conservation measures on his own and has maintained all of them throughout the years. The practices installed include a 550-foot Diversion Structure, several grassed waterways, animal waste control facilities, water and sediment control basins (WASCOBs), block structures, and pipe structures. Since the fields were protected by the no-till system in place, little sediment needed to be filtered through the waterways or WASCOBs. The reduced sediment load adds to the general longevity of the conservation measures.

Melvin’s innovative farming methods were documented in several publications, and he hosted farm tours to showcase his practices. Although Melvin turned the operation over to his son Roger Sermersheim several years ago, he still assists on the farm. Melvin is a member of St. Anthony of Padua Church, and a member of the Ireland Historical Society. In 1981, he was named the Conservation Farmer of the Year by the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District, and he served on the Advisory Board for the Dubois County Bank in the mid-1980s.

The Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Supervisors nominated Melvin for the Master Farmer Award. Alan Weyer, Chair of the SWCD, said, “I can’t think of a better person to receive this award. Melvin’s farming methods serves as a good example for us all.”

Melvin relied on his past experiences over to help determine whether the measures he implemented would be successful. He thought ideas through, and tried the practices if he thought they would work. He said with a smile, “I guess it worked out all right!”

Dubois County SWCD
1486 Executive Blvd. Suite A
Jasper IN 47546
(812) 482-1171 Ext. 3
judi.brown@in.nacdnet.net

PRESORTED
STANDARD
US POSTAGE PAID
JASPER IN 47546
PERMIT NO. 191

OFFICE HOURS: MON-FRI 8 AM TO 4:30 PM

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
NEWSLETTER

Visit our webpage at duboisswcd.org !

SWCD Provides Conservation Items

- **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 \$7/acre.

- **Stapler**

Installing erosion control blankets? This stapler makes completing the job easy! The plunger simply pushes the staples into the ground. No rental fee.

- **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 fee.

- **Tile Flags**

Flags on 36" wire staff can be used to mark underground power lines, or surveying jobs. \$7.00/bundle of 100; various colors.

SWCD Program Assistant Joins Staff

The Supervisors of the Dubois County SWCD welcome their newest member to the conservation team, Michael Wilhite.

Michael, the Program Assistant, will be the first person a customer sees while visiting the SWCD office.

Michael provides assistance to all staff within their program areas, improving office operations.

He is a native of the area, now residing in Huntington with his wife Bethany and daughter Abby. Michael grew up involved with the farming industry. His family raised cattle and hogs, as well as corn and hay. He is a graduate of Crawford County High School and is in the process of finishing a degree in Atmospheric Science at Indiana University. Michael is also the pastor of Limestone Baptist Church and is very involved in the community.

