Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District

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812-482-1171 x3 • www.duboisswcd.org

Fall, 2021

The Conservation Conversation

The SWCD Wants You To Become A Supervisor

Join the SWCD Board of Supervisors and make a lasting difference to the county's natural resources. The board consists of five supervisors who govern the SWCD, three of which are elected at the annual meeting, two appointed and all five serve three year terms. A supervisor carries out the mission of the Dubois County SWCD and should exhibit a good conservation ethic through the use of conservation practices in cooperation with local, state and national agencies.

Contact our office to see how you can join a team that includes Chair and 2019 Supervisor of the Year Brenda Sermersheim, Vice Chair Glenn Goeppner and members Patrick Eckerle and Andrew Helming.

Two Dubois County Farmers Receive Fiver Friendly Farmer Award

The annual River Friendly Farmer Award ceremony recognizes farmers for their implementation of conservation practices, like no-till and cover crops, which ultimately protect waterways and improve water quality in Indiana. Indiana's lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands are valuable natural resources.

Mark & Nancy Welp of Welp Farms

This year both Mark & Nancy Welp of Welp Farms and Kevin Mundy of Mundy Farms LLC were recognized at River Friendly Farms of Dubois County.

Mundy Farms LLC utilizes conservation practices such as no-till, minimum till and strip till, soil sampling, variable rate fertilizer application, cover crops, grassed waterways and WASBs. These practices have reduced erosion and fertilizer runoff while also building soil health. This farm includes classified forest acres, CRP wetland habitat; and, they have conducted timber stand improvement and invasive species management. Kevin has also been involved with the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District and their Land Stewardship Initiative.

Welp Farms produces grain and livestock in the Richland Creek-Flat Creek watershed. They use soil sampling to determine whether manure or fertilizer needs to be spread on their fields. They also use rotational grazing and have installed exclusive fencing to keep the cattle out of their ponds. They have also implemented waterways and filter strips and as a result have observed cleaner water leaving the farm, containing less soil and nutrients.

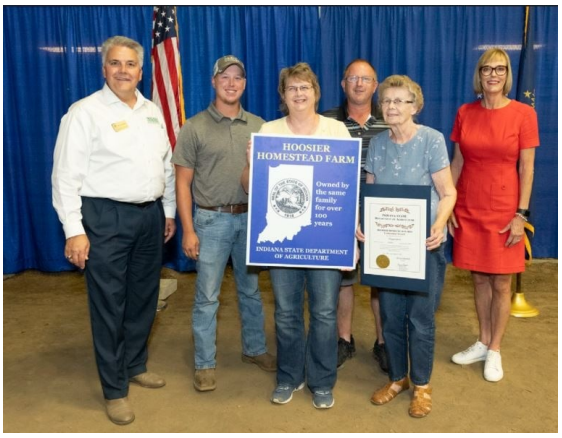
Contents

Two Dubois County Farms Receive Hoosier Homestead Award

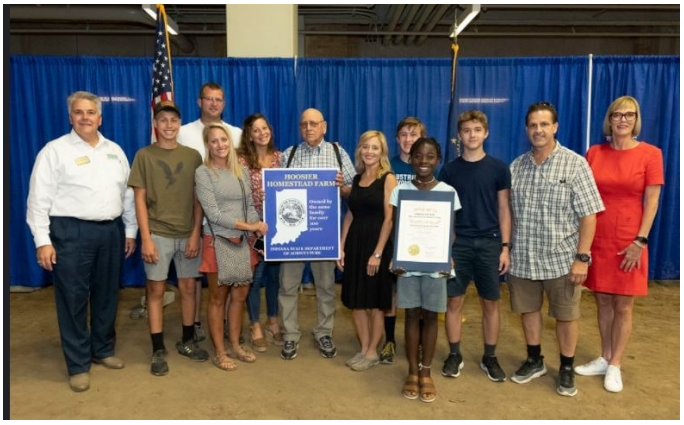
At the Indiana State Fair on August 18, 2021 Lt. Gov Suzanne Crouch and Indiana State Department of Agriculture Director Bruce Kettler presented 73 family farms with a Hoosier Homestead Award, recognizing their family's longstanding commitment to Indiana agriculture.

To be named a Hoosier Homestead, farms must be owned by the same family for more than 100 consecutive years, and consist of 20 acres or more, or produce more than $1,000 in agricultural products per year.
Families are eligible for three different distinctions of the Hoosier Homestead Award, based on the age of the farm. They can receive the Centennial Award for 100 years, Sesquicentennial Award for 150 years or Bicentennial Award for 200 years of ownership. Since the program's inception in 1976, nearly 6000 families have received the award. Often, a Hoosier Homestead farm is easily recognized because most recipients proudly display their awarded sign on their property.

Congratulations to the our two Dubois county recipients of the Hoosier Homestead Centennial awards.



The Hoppenjans Farm, Operating Since 1921


The Lawrence Gutgsell Farm, Operating Since 1910

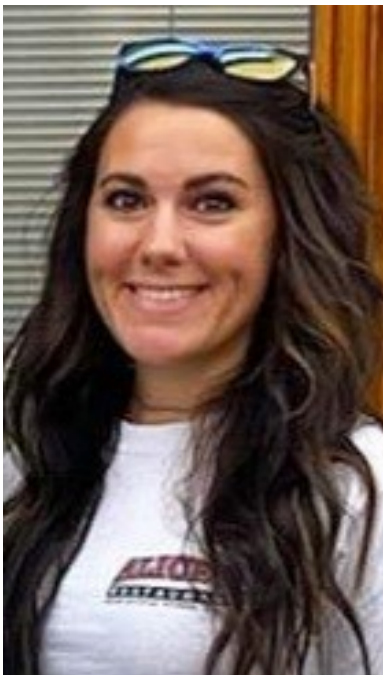
New NRCS District Conservationist

Please welcome our new NRCS District Conservationist Emily Kelly.

Emily started her southern Indiana conservation career at the Pike County SWCD as their district technician. There she found a passion for combining agriculture, natural resources and people. This passion took her on a path to the NRCS where she worked as an engineering technician out of Princeton. There she became familiar with the survey and design process of water and sediment control basins, grassed waterways and other practices that the NRCS helps you to implement. Emily is excited to serve Dubois County as your conservationist.

Outside of work, Emily enjoys bow-fishing, kayaking, horseback riding, traveling and spending quality time with family and friends.

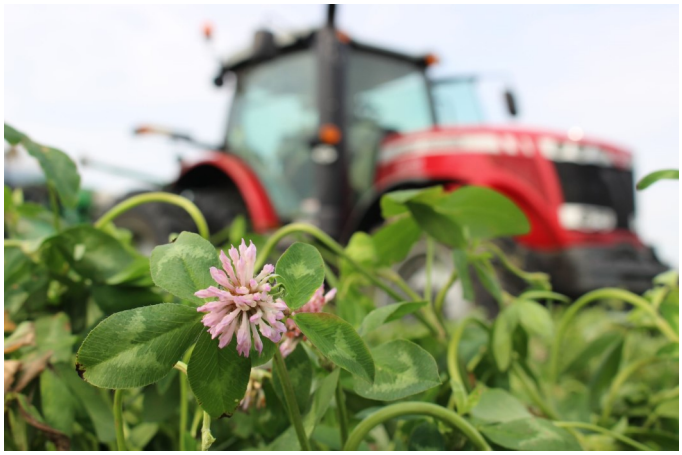
Welcome to the team Emily Kelly!



Record Setting Year for Indiana Cover Crops

According to a recent conservation survey, Indiana farmers have set a conservation record this year by planting an estimated 1.5 million acres of overwinter living covers, the largest amount ever recorded by an Indiana Conservation Partnership survey.

Overwintering living covers (i.e. - cover crops and small grains, like wheat) are known for their environmental benefits. Cover crops and small grains help increase organic matter in the soil and improve overall soil health by adding living roots to the soil more months of the year. Cover crops also improve water infiltration into the soil, while other covers, like legumes serve as natural fertilizers.



No-till planting corn into red clover at Roger and Nick Wennings' farm.

Although the conservation transect doesn't differentiate between cover crops and small grains, Indiana farmers typically plant fewer than 200,000 acres of small grains annually, so cover crops vastly dominate the 1.5 million estimated acres. With the exception of corn and soybeans, cover crops are planted on more acres than any other commodity crop in Indiana. Cover crops are typically planted in the fall after harvest and designed to protect the soil and keep roots in the ground throughout the winter, which improves soil health and helps filter water runoff.

As a result of the cover crops planted last year, it is estimated that 1.6 million tons of sediment was prevented from entering Indiana's waterways, which is enough sediment to fill more than 453 Olympic-size swimming pools. Overwintering covers also prevented 4.1 million pounds of nitrogen and over 2 million pounds of phosphorus from entering Indiana's waterways.

The conservation survey also showed that 62% of farmed acres were not tilled and 18% had employed reduced tillage after the 2020 harvest. This early spring survey is not intended to quantify pre-planting tillage.

The conservation transect is a visual survey of cropland in the state. It was conducted between March and April 2021 by members of the Indiana Conservation Partnership, including the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Indiana's Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Purdue Extension, as well as Earth Team volunteers, to show a more complete story of the state's conservation efforts.

Dubois County 2020 Cover Crop Totals

Corn	Soybean	Total
13,595 acres	12,187 acres	25,800 acres 26% of Cropland

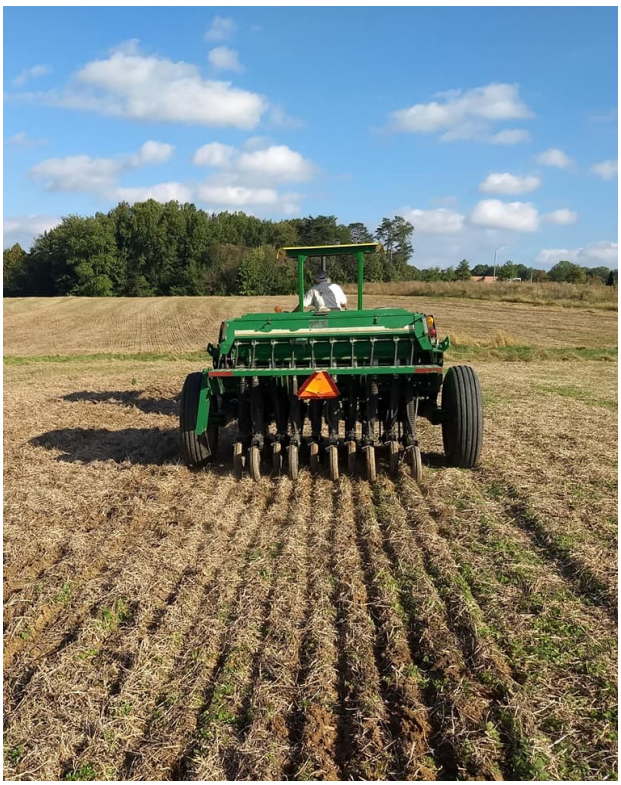
Go to ISDA: Cover Crop and Tillage Transect Data (in.gov) to see how Dubois county measures up to the rest of the Indiana.

To learn about how you can get involved in planting cover crops, contact our office 812-482-1171 Ext 3.

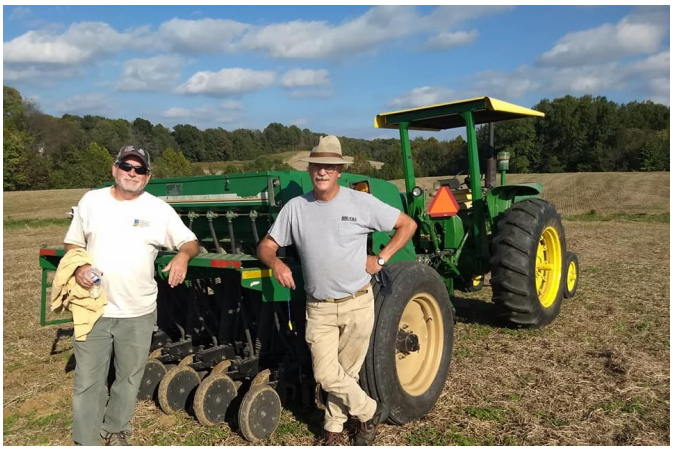
Busy Time at the Land Stewardship Initiative

What a busy October we've had at the Vincennes University Jasper Campus, Land Stewardship Initiative! It all started with supervisor Glenn Goeppner harvesting 2,524.67 bushels of soy beans from 45 acres, continued with Alan Smock and Bart Pitstick using our no-till drill to plant 1,902 pounds of cover crops and ended with hosting the State FFA Soil Judging Contest.

The Land Stewardship Initiative began in early 2012 as a partnership between VUJC and the Dubois SWCD to utilize the VUJC farmland as a learning/teaching project to demonstrate practices that improve soil health. The site presents multiple examples of best management practices to improve soil health and water quality using innovative practices. Through no-till farming and planting cover crops we have been able to reduce erosion and improve soil health. Having these living roots in the soil year round helps to keep nutrients in the soil and biological organisms thriving. As a result we have now have more resilient, stable soil with an increase in organic matter.



Check out these beautiful lines drawn by our no-till drill. What Cover Crops did we plant?

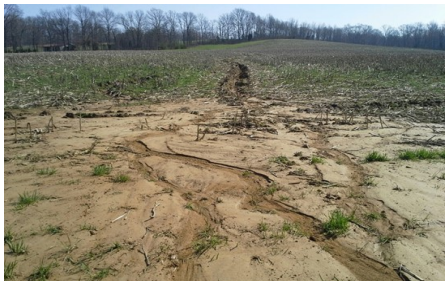


Bart Pitstick & Alan Smock drilling in cover crops.

Fall 2021 Cover Crops			
Winter Peas	250lbs	Barley	432lbs
Spring Oats	450lbs	Winter Rape Seed	180lbs
Winter Oats	500lbs	Crimson Clover	180lbs

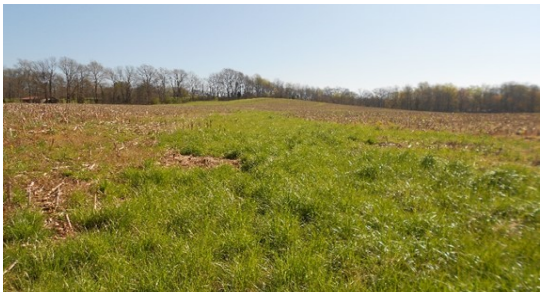
There is a story to be told at LSI, a story that wouldn't exist without such a great team of volunteers and donors dedicated to championing conservation and changing minds. Thanks to all who have made the LSI project a success these past 10 years! As we look forward to the next 10 years we need your help. Join our volunteer force and become a community leader educating the both farmers and backyard gardeners on soil health and water conservation.

If you'd like to get involved or learn more bout the practices utilized contact our office at 812-482-1171 Ext 3 or via e-mail duboisswcd@gmail.com and request a tour.



Learn how to turn an issue like erosion …
← 2012

..into a solution of a grassed waterway
2014 →



and so much more!

Identification & Control of Japanese Stiltgrass

Japanese stiltgrass (Microstegium vimineum) is a non-native annual grass that was introduced to the southeastern U.S. from Asia in the early 1900s. Now found in much of the eastern U.S. , this invasive grass is common in parts of Dubois County though in many places it has just started to invade. Fortunately, controlling this invasive grass can quickly restore the diversity of an area. A variety of effective control methods are described on the back of this sheet.

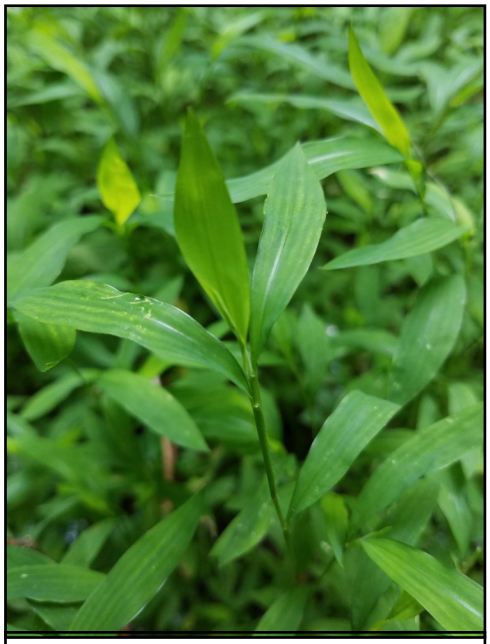


Photo By Emily Finch

Why should I be concerned?

Japanese stiltgrass creates large, dense infestations that can quickly crowd out native wildflowers, ferns and grasses. Invasions also reduce tree regeneration and slow the growth of tree seedlings. Japanese stiltgrass produces abundant seed and can spread quickly from one property to another by seeds carried on boots or tires. Landowners should be diligent in locating and eradicating new populations.

Where you will find it?

It is often found invading along forested roads, trails, and streams but can colonize a variety of habitats including sunny, open ridgetops and bottomland riparian habitats. Areas that have been disturbed (e.g. yards, streambanks, forests with windthrows or timber harvests) are especially vulnerable to invasions. It can also invade lawns and successfully flower and fruit despite regular mowing.

How do you identify Japanese stiltgrass?

Japanese stiltgrass can be identified by its relatively broad, bright green leaves that often form a shallow 'v' as they extend from the stem (see photo at right). Leaves also have a faint silver line down the mid-section. It is most often found in dense patches over three feet in diameter. It produces seed in September and October, while most native grasses produce seed much earlier in the year (June-July).

How can I control Japanese stiltgrass?

Preventing the movement of Japanese stiltgrass is the highest priority in management! Clean your boots and clothes to make sure you don't carry seeds to new areas.

Small Areas: For small areas, hand weeding before the grass produces seed (e.g. before the end of August) is very effective at controlling Japanese stiltgrass. Mowing can help to reduce the amount of seed produced, but will likely not completely eliminate the species.

Pre-Emergent Methods of Control: Pre-emergent herbicides applied to the soil prevent the Japanese stiltgrass seeds from germinating. However, they will also prevent all other seeds from germinating, too. Known infestations can be treated before the stiltgrass germinates (March) by applying a pre-emergent herbicide such as pendimethalin or oryzalin.

Post-Emergent Methods of Control: Later in the season (June-August) it is best to use an herbicide with no soil activity to minimize non-target dam-age. Glyphosate (Drexel Imitator Plus or the water-safe Catt Plex) and the grass specific herbicide clethodim (Clethodim 2E) are available locally at Rural King. Clethodim acts slowly (two to four weeks), but at low use rates (0.5% - 0.66%) clethodim will kill annual grasses and only temporarily effect native perennial grasses. Glyphosate will act quickly (one to two weeks) but is non-selective (will kill all green plants it contacts). A very low use rate (0.5%) of glyphosate can be used, which will only temporarily effect other plant species, minimizing damage to non-target species.

Always follow label directions when using herbicides!

For more information and to print some great fact sheet please visit

Monroe County Identify and Reduce Invasive Species. Japanese Stiltgrass (mc-iris.org)

by Victor Shelton, October, 2021

My wife has been splitting open persimmon seeds. For those who don't know what this is supposed to mean – it is an old wives' tale method of predicting the upcoming winter weather. For clarity, I'm not saying my wife is old, but she does like to read persimmon seeds! Traditionally, you split the persimmon seed open to reveal the whitish sprout inside. It may require a bit of imagination, but they are supposed to resemble a spoon, a fork or a knife. The spoon is said to predict lots of heavy, wet snow. A fork means you should expect a mild winter. A knife indicates an icy, windy and bitter cold winter. Surprisingly or luckily, it is often correct. She split open several seeds this year – all were spoons.

The inside of one of this year's persimmon seeds.

Now, I would not bank on that information, but it is a reminder that we need to be prepared ahead of time for whatever the weather decides to throw at us.

Each year is a little different, so strategy and planning must be adjusted as needed as the season progresses. It is also important to have a game plan on how to deal with unplanned circumstances.

I like to try and think ahead of the next livestock move – often calling it staging. Early in the season, the term staging is easier to understand. It is the planned and predicted, yet adjustable, allocations for a set time frame. During spring growth, you want to keep forage as vegetative as possible to provide quality feed for grazing animals and to maintain that solar panel in order to increase forage yield as much as possible with adequate rest. A lot of that is timing of when to go back to the first paddock and start over. It requires a watchful eye to know when to do that too.

By late summer, and into early fall, the growing days for forages start getting numbered. The impact of this is intensified around the Sept. 22 when fall equinox kicks in – daylight is now less than 12 hours per day. This slight change in daylight does slow forage growth. Staging now has more to do with allocating out grazable forage/fodder that is present, allowing as much time as possible for plants to continue to grow to get maximum yield to graze later, and knowing when to graze what in order to maximize all of it and graze longer while meeting livestock nutritional needs.

What should you be grazing right now? If you still need to stockpile forage or rest pasture, then annuals or crop residue can certainly work. Corn stock residue can provide at least 30 days of decent grazing after harvest date. After 30 days, the quality of that fodder will decrease quickly and only maintenance animals should really graze them, unless higher quality annuals have been planted into the stalks, raising the nutritional value and they are ready to graze. If you have annuals such as oats and brassicas that were planted a few weeks ago, some of those can now be grazed. You would not want to graze them too hard if you don't have to; you will want to save some for later so leaving sufficient residual is important, ideally about four inches

Some areas still have an abundance of forage available for grazing. Deferring this forage for later use provides an opportunity for more growth in the declining daylight days and more opportunity for grazing later. Once we have a good killing freeze, which will be coming soon in the northern part of the state, you can feel comfortable to start grazing stockpiled forages without worrying too much about stressing the plant too much. You want the plant to build both the top and new roots to store energy for next spring. If you continue grazing into late fall the plant will be weakened some next spring.

As we proceed later into October and approach November, forages that don't hold their value very well, or for very long, need to be grazed first. Orchardgrass, hay aftermath, perennial ryegrass and even smooth brome grass once it has for sure gone dormant should be first on the menu. I would then move back to any annual small grains if soil conditions permit.

The backbone dominating stockpiled forage for the rest of the winter here in the Midwest is most certainly tall fescue. Whether old Kentucky 31 or an endophyte-friendly tall fescue like Max-Q, if it is dominantly new fall regrowth it will hold its nutritional value better than anything for as long as it lasts. The fescue should be the last thing normally grazed in the winter…so save it for late use. It will hold up to some abuse, maintain decent quality and is basically standing hay

Summer annual warm-season grasses, such as sudangrass or sorghum-sudangrass hybrids often have some late season value, but caution should be taken in utilizing these forages this time of year, Johnsongrass included. Once frosted, these forages quickly start shutting down and can start producing a cyanide-containing compound commonly called prussic acid. This acid is the same compound that is produced by these same plants under stressed conditions. Livestock should be removed from these forages for 10-14 days to allow for the forages to "dry down" and the prussic acid to dissipate before grazing again. Frosted sudangrass or sorghum-sudangrass hybrids can be harvested for balage right after being frosted and later fed if they are allowed their normal fermentation process time period of three or four weeks. Frosted areas may only be "pockets" in a field to start with. Any regrowth from the base of the plant after a frost can also be very high in prussic acid. If in doubt about nitrates or prussic acid – test before feeding or grazing

I would strongly recommend doing an animal to forage/hay/feed balance right now to see how you are set for the winter. Better to figure out now that you may be short than later when finding and moving hay/feed is more difficult. In dry areas, consider trying to buy yourself a little time for more forage regrowth by feeding some hay or other stored feed now to maximize any potential growth while you can.

Last year most producers would have appreciated a little more free concrete, or rather, frozen ground. It is best to be prepared. Mud is certainly worse around feeding, watering and other concentrated areas. One of the best solutions for these concentrated areas is to install a heavy use protection area or HUAP if you like acronyms, or more simply, rock pads. These areas are fairly simple to construct and better yet, very economical and one of those items I consider "money well spent" for animal well-being.

The rock pad should ideally be placed in a well-drained area. Sometimes you are better off to consider moving your winter-feeding area if drainage is an issue. The ideal site would also have wind protection associated with it. Sometimes, this could be just a row of strategically placed round bales. The pad should also be located away from major drainage areas and water bodies, so you don't have to worry about contaminating them with possible runoff. You would certainly not want to create a resource concern with these areas, so they need to be located appropriately, managed properly and be a part of a planned system. Information on how to build a rock pad can be found at any USDA service center

Remember, it's not about maximizing a grazing event, but maximizing a grazing season! Keep on grazing!
Reminders & Opportunities National Grazing Conference – December 6-9, 2021, Myrtle Beach, SC. For more information go to: https://www.grazinglands.org/grazing-conference/

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

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Rental Equipment Available at Dubois County SWCD

No-Till Drill—*Rental fee is $8/acre or minimum of $50.*
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.

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.

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.