



Dubois County Soil & Water Conservation District
1486 Executive Blvd. Suite A Jasper, IN 47546
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www.duboisswcd.org

The Conservation Conversation

Winter-Spring 2023

Annual Meeting

The 77th Annual Meeting of the Dubois Soil & Water Conservation District was held on Tuesday, February 14th at the Thyen-Clark Cultural Center in Jasper, Indiana. 134 community members attended the meeting which was sponsored by Beck's Hybrids, Freedom Bank, German American Bank, Old National Bank, and Springs Valley Bank. The dinner was prepared by Carla's Catering and drinks were served by members of the Forest Park High School, Southridge High School, Dubois High School and Jasper High School FFA teams. Following dinner, Kent Yeager, President of the Indiana Barn Foundation, spoke about historic barns of Indiana and provided every attendee with copies of Indiana's Heritage Barns.



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Conservation Farmer of the Year



The Otto J. Bauer, Conservation Farmer of the Year award, sponsored by German American Bank and Old National Bank, was awarded to Joe Keusch. As a fifth generation farmer, Keusch knows a thing or two about his land. And his more than 110 year old farm located in the Elle

Creek watershed is a little different than most in Indiana. A portion of his farm is part of a former coal mine. When the mine was reclaimed, Joe struggled to get his soil health up to par. Joe said that “Anyone that has ever dealt with coal mine ground knows it’s very finicky the way it behaves – not only with growing a crop but the way it handles water. Seeing wash outs and sheet erosion on the old mine ground was hard to watch.” He started his conservation planning process by adding cover crops and in three short years the microbiological activity was returning to the land. Joe has worked with the NRCS to obtain EQIP funding to help address his conservation needs. Bart Pitstick, retired NRCS District Conservationist, described Joe as an innovator; a person who experiments on his land to see what works with his unique soil.

River Friendly Farmer

The River Friendly Farmer awards were presented last summer at the Indiana State Fair. The SWCD nominated Daryl Auffart, and Scott Balsmeyer to recognize them for their wise farm management practices. The practices they have voluntarily implemented are protecting waterways and water quality in Indiana and beyond. During the annual meeting, Auffart was presented with a sign to post on his farm in recognition of his accomplishments. Balsmeyer was unable to attend the presentation and will receive his recognition at a later time.



*Left to Right: Glenn Goeppner
SWCD Supervisor, Daryl
Auffart, Laura Fribley, ISDA*

Friend of Conservation Award

Dubois County has many champions of conservation, so the SWCD Supervisors created a special award to recognize their efforts. This year, the Friend of Conservation award was presented to Bart Pitstick. Pitstick started his career in conservation with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources before joining the NRCS in 1983 as a soil conservationist. He became a district conservationist in 1989, moving to Jasper and serving Dubois County from 1997 until his retirement in 2018. Bart was instrumental in the development of the LSI, continuing to champion the project long after he retired. Pitstick has been a staunch supporter of Soil & Water Conservation Districts for more than 40 years, and the SWCDs are better for it.



Left to Right: Arlene Fleck SWCD Supervisor, Bart Pitstick, Pat Eckerle SWCD Supervisor

SWCD Elections



Left to Right: Mike Kluesner Dubois County Council President, Brenda Sermersheim SWCD Supervisor, Andrew Helming SWCD Supervisor

Brenda Sermersheim was elected to serve another three-year term as a Dubois County SWCD Supervisor. The oath of office was administered by Mike Kluesner, Dubois County Council President. Sermersheim is the Vice President of Agricultural Banking for German American Bank. She and her husband farm in both Dubois and Perry Counties where they grow crops and raise hogs. Sermersheim was the first female Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Supervisor, Vice Chair, and Chair.

Retirement- Judi Brown

The evening concluded with a special award being presented to Judi Brown. After 25 years of dedication, Brown retired as the Executive Director of the Dubois County SWCD. 25 years ago, in 1998, the Dubois County SWCD office had a staff of one. Brown worked tirelessly with the SWCD supervisors, the county commissioners and the county council to increase the staff to 4 full time positions and one grant funded position. In addition, during this 25 year period, she was instrumental in accommodating eight SWCD interns and eight former employees. Six of the former interns and employees are still working in the conservation field today after receiving their foundation from the Dubois County SWCD and Brown.

A substantial amount money has been awarded and put to work in Dubois County due to grant applications written and administered by Brown since 1998. Funds which were used to assist with cost share for putting conservation practices to work on the ground for our land owners, purchasing equipment for landowners to use, and matching funds needed for other grant funded projects . These funds created a ripple effect in our local economy by the hiring of contractors and the purchase of materials from our local businesses to complete projects for the land owners. Brown worked with our local youth and was instrumental in implementing a Dubois County Soil Judging Invitational with the first one taking place in the year 2000. Hundreds of students have participated in these events. Three of our local Dubois County Ag Teachers and one current SWCD Staff Member attended these Soil Judging Events as students.



*Left: Brenda Sermersheim, SWCD Supervisor
Right: Judi Brown, SWCD Executive Director*

Brown has seen many changes in the last 25 years. She has been instrumental in accommodating those changes and utilizing new methods of implementation for the benefit of all in meeting the mission of the SWCD in promoting to all citizens, the vital benefits of protecting and preserving our natural resources. Brown, many times, working behind the scenes and late into the evenings for the betterment of the Staff, the Dubois County SWCD and our local land owners, putting others first before herself. On behalf of the Dubois County SWCD Supervisors, the SWCD staff, SWCD partners, and Friends we thank Judi Brown for 25 years of service to the SWCD

New Staff at SWCD

Aubree Pond- Executive Director



Aubree Pond started as the Executive Director in April 2023. As Executive Director, Pond oversees the operations of the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District and is responsible for all projects and programs. She serves as the County Department Head, supports the SWCD Supervisors in carrying out the programs in accordance with state regulations and supervises the SWCD staff. Pond is excited about the opportunity to serve the Dubois County Community as the Executive Director of the Dubois County SWCD.

Pond is originally from Brownsburg, Indiana where she developed a love for the outdoors with her grandparents. She obtained a Bachelor's of Science in Interdisciplinary Agriculture with a minor in Natural Resources and Environmental Science in 2022. While at Purdue, she was an active member of the Alpha Gamma Delta sorority, was a writer for the Odyssey Online, and interned and volunteered her time to many organizations including the Harrison-Crawford State Forest, the Columbian Park Zoo, and the DNR. Pond enjoys spending her free time outside with her beagle Ranger, backpacking, kayaking, and being with friends and family.

Veronica Helming-Administrative Assistant



Veronica Helming has been the Administrative Assistant at the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District since May 2023. As the Administrative Assistant, Helming reconciles financial reports, assists producers with equipment rental and ensures files are up to date. She processes correspondence and ensures inquiries are handled accordingly. If she doesn't know the answer, she will get you to the person that does. Helming maintains the SWCD website, prepares quarterly newsletters and assists with creating educational displays for local events. In addition to her duties with the SWCD, she also assists the NRCS District Conservationist with administrative functions in the office.

Helming graduated with a Bachelor's in Accounting and Finance from the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University in 2016. She has seven years experience in banking and management. She currently lives on her husband's (Andy) family farm near Kyana and the Ferdinand State Forest. She has two children, Amelia and Joseph. In her free time, she enjoys helping Andy around the farm, gardening, reading, and just being outside with her family.

Poison Hemlock (Conium Maculatum)

Poison Hemlock is a biennial, meaning it only lives for two years before producing seed and dying. The only way to eliminate infestations is to prevent that seed production. Hemlock plants start as a short basal rosette with fern-like leaves. Then, in their second year of life, plants will send up a flowering stem, also called bolting, in spring/early summer (around May/June in southern Indiana). These flowering plants can be quite large, anywhere from 3 to 10 feet tall. Because Hemlock is in the carrot family, it produces abundant umbrellashaped clusters of white flowers, often compared to the flowers of Queen Anne's Lace, aka wild carrot. To help distinguish the plants, remember that Hemlock blooms before Queen Anne's lace, lacks any hairs on its stems/leaves (a common feature of Queen Anne's Lace), and has distinctive purple splotches on its stems and often the base of large leaves as well.

There are a few options to control Poison Hemlock, so long as plants are not allowed to flower and produce seed. In fact, Hemlock seeds have a very short duration in the soil, and many populations can be eradicated with just a few years of effective treatments (a short timeframe for most weed control). Small populations can be removed by hand, either digging the plants up or severing the root with a sharp shovel (wear gloves to avoid contact with plant toxins). Cutting/mowing the plants is NOT effective unless repeated regularly through the summer as plants will resprout readily. In fact, mowing after plants have produced seed is one way infestations have spread through the area. Herbicides are the most efficient way to control large areas, and several chemicals are effective, including glyphosate, triclopyr, and 2,4-D products. All of which also come in aquatic safe formulations for use near open water creeks and ditches. Whatever product you choose, make sure to read and follow all label directions

NOXIOUS WEED ALERT

Do You Have Poison Hemlock?

Hemlock must be controlled BEFORE flowering

- Look for **fern-like leaves**, white flower clusters & **purple splotches on stem**
- Learn how to **identify & control** Poison Hemlock at www.duboisswcd.org or call 812-482-1171 x3
- *Free site visits available in Dubois, Daviess, & Martin counties*





Recent Events

Memorial Hospital Earth Day



JMS Career Cruise



Heart of America Grazing Conference



Envirothon



In April, Forest Park and Southridge FFA Chapters competed in Regional and State Envirothon. At Regionals, Southridge placed 1st and Forest Park 2nd. At State, Southridge placed 5th overall and medaling in the written portion with 2nd place.



Upcoming Events

July 17-21, Dubois County 4H Fair

July 26, 7PM Parklands Prairie Walk

August 2, 6:30PM Prescribed Grazing for Invasive, Registration \$10, contact Veronica Helming to register at duboisswcd@gmail.com or 812-482-1171 x3

For More Information Visit our Website: duboisswcd.org



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SWCD Board of Supervisors

Brenda Sermersheim, Chair
Glenn Goepner, Vice Chair
Pat Eckerle, Member
Arlene Fleck, Treasurer

Dubois County SWCD Staff

Aubree Pond, Executive Director
Justin Bary, Resource Specialist
Melissa Ruschau, Resource Specialist
Emily Finch, Invasive Species Specialist
Veronica Helming, Administrative Assistant

Partnership Staff

Clay Cox, NRCS District Conservationist
Andrea Gogel, ISDA DOSC



Rental Equipment Available **Dubois County SWCD**

No-Till Drill- \$12 Per Acre, \$100 Minimum

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.

No-Till Seeder- \$12 Per Acre, \$100 Minimum

Great Plains 9' No-Till Seeder

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. Buy staples and the stapler rental fee is waived.

Spinning Jenny- No Rental Fee

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- \$12.00/bundle of 100

Flags on 36" wire staff can be used to mark underground power lines or surveying jobs.