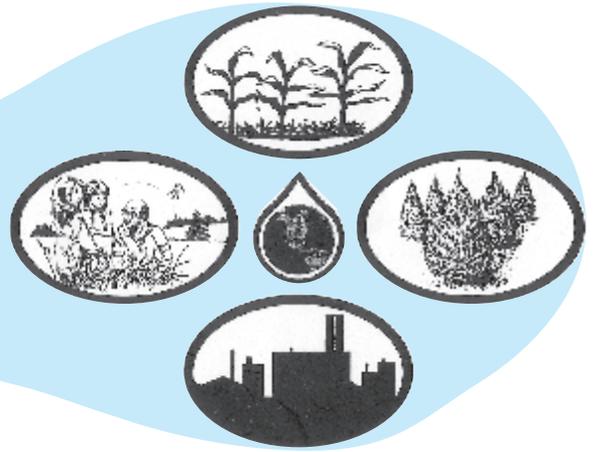




St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District

CONSERVATION KALEIDOSCOPE



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

March/April 2012
Volume 14, Issue 2

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What's Going On...

Call for Details & to RSVP

MARCH

- 1 - **Deadline to Pre-Order Trees.** *Rain Barrels & Composters may be pre-ordered until Mar. 30. See pg. 2 for more details about our 26th Annual Tree Sale Fundraiser & "Extra Trees" Sale*

- 19 - **SWCD Monthly Board Meeting,** 7PM @ Our New Office. *Public always welcome, no RSVP needed*

- 20 - **FREE EVENT: Compost 101 Seminar,** 6PM @ Downtown St. Joseph County Public Library

- 30 - **Deadline to Pre-Order Rain Barrels, Accessories, & Composters.** *Need a Order Form? Call today!*

APRIL

- 4 - **FREE EVENT: Cover Crop Field Day,** 4PM (4/4@4) @Randy Ehninger Farm, So. Bend *(see pg. 3)*

- 14 - **PICK-UP DAY for Pre-Ordered Trees, Rain Barrels, Accessories, & Composters and "Extra Trees" for Sale,** 8 -Noon @ St. Jos. Co. 4H Fair Grounds, Swine Barn

- 17 - **SWCD Monthly Board Meeting,** 7PM @ Our New Office

MAY

- 4 - **2nd Annual Michiana Original Art Rain Barrel Auction,** 7PM @ So. Bend Museum of Art, Century Center, No RSVP Needed

- 21 - **SWCD Monthly Board Meeting,** 7PM @ Our New Office

Have You Heard?

Soil Health a Top Priority

This year, **SOIL HEALTH** will be a focus of the Indiana NRCS and the St. Joseph County SWCD.

Why should you care about soil health?

Soil health is "the capacity of a soil to function" (Doran & Parkin, 1996). How well is your soil functioning to infiltrate water and feed growing plants?

Soil is a living factory of macroscopic and microscopic workers who need food to eat and places to live to do their work. There are more individual organisms in a teaspoon of soil than there are people on earth; thus, the soil is controlled by these organisms.

Managing for soil health (improved soil function) is mostly a matter of maintaining suitable habitat for the myriad of creatures that comprise the soil food web. Tillage, fertilizer, livestock, pesticides, and other management tools can be used to improve soil health, or they can significantly damage soil health if not applied correctly.

Soil health is improved by disturbing the soil less, growing the greatest diversity of crops (in rotation and as diverse mixtures of cover crops), maintaining living roots in the soil as much as possible (with crops and cover crops), and keeping the soil covered with residue at all times.

Many soils have a water infiltration problem that causes a water runoff problem. If soil health is improved, the structure of the soil results in

greater water infiltration, less runoff, less or no erosion, and reduced incidence of flooding and sedimentation.

MANAGING FOR SOIL HEALTH MUST BEGIN BY CHANGING THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT SOIL!



Photos taken 11/7/11 at the St. Joseph County SWCD's Cover Crop Test Plot. Cover crops can be a key ingredient for managing for soil health. For more on the SWCD's Cover Crop Test Plot and our upcoming Cover Crop Field Day on 4/4 @4, see pg. 3.

Reference

Doran, J. W. and Parkin, T. B. 1996: Quantitative indicators of soil quality: A minimum dataset. In *Methods for Assessing Soil Quality*, eds. J. W. Doran & A. J. Jones, Soil Science Society of America, Inc. Madison, pp. 25-37

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26th Annual Tree Seedling & Plant Sale Fundraiser, also Featuring Rain Barrels & Composters

Thank you for supporting local conservation efforts!

We are sincerely grateful to everyone who **pre-ordered tree seedlings, groundcover, rain barrels, rain barrel accessories, and tumbling composters** during our 2011-2012 conservation tree sale fundraiser. **Pre-ordered items will be available for pick up on Saturday, April 14, 2012 from 8:00 a.m. to Noon (EST) at the St. Joseph County 4-H Fairgrounds in the Swine Barn.**

Many of the tree species offered in our annual program are native to Indiana & attractive to various types of wildlife. One of the easiest and most cost effective methods for conserving water and improving water quality is to install a rain barrel. (If you're asking yourself, "What's a rain barrel, visit this shortcut to our website: www.tinyurl.com/swcd-my-yard). Composting is nature's process of recycling decomposed organic materials into a rich healthy soil known as compost, and it reduces the amount of refuse that would otherwise end up in our landfills. The rain barrels and composters we sell are made by a local company in Minooka, Illinois called "Upcycle Products" (www.upcycle-products.com), who specializes in making their rain barrels and composters from thoroughly cleaned, re-used USDA food-grade, high density polyethylene plastic (which inhibits algae & bacterial growth), which further helps the environment by diverting the barrels from landfills. We use the funds generated through these conservation product sales to provide education and outreach programs to people of all ages in your community, as well as a variety of technical and financial assistance programs to private landowners. **In other words, your purchase shows your support for local conservation efforts in St. Joseph County!**

Missed the deadline to pre-order? That's OK!

If you missed the deadlines for pre-ordering (*see pg. 1*), or if you would like to order additional items, you still have a chance to purchase them. We will have a limited number of extra items for sale at the same time as the Order Pick-Up. Come early for the best selection, as the extra items are sold on a first-come, first-serve basis.

We are also planning on having a very limited number of "extra" **rain barrels** on hand to sell on Saturday, April 14th, as well. **The prices (which include tax) for our "Saturday Sale" items are listed below for your convenience. If you have ANY questions, give us a call at 574-291-7444, ext. 3.**

Type	Species / Item	Price	Type	Species / Item	Price
Evergreen	American Arborvitae	\$2.10/tree	Deciduous	Tulip Poplar	\$1.85/tree
Evergreen	Blue Spruce	\$2.20/tree	Flowering	American Cranberry	\$1.50/tree
Evergreen	Canadian Hemlock	\$2.10/tree	Flowering	American Hazelnut	\$1.50/tree
Evergreen	Fraser Fir	\$2.30/tree	Flowering	Butterfly Bush	\$1.85/tree
Evergreen	Norway Spruce	\$2.40/tree	Flowering	Common Lilac	\$1.70/tree
Evergreen	White Pine	\$2.00/tree	Flowering	Redbud	\$1.90/tree
Deciduous	Black Walnut	\$1.30/tree	Flowering	Shadblow Serviceberry	\$2.20/tree
Deciduous	Bur Oak	\$1.50/tree	Flowering	White Flowering Dogwood	\$1.90/tree
Deciduous	Common Persimmon	\$1.50/tree	Groundcover	Pachysandra (25 plants/12.5-25 ft ²)	\$17.00/25-pack
Deciduous	Hybrid Poplar	\$2.10/tree	Wildflower	American Mix (1oz/250 ft ²)	\$7.50/pack
Deciduous	River Birch	\$1.30/tree	Wildflower	Bird & Butterfly Mix (1oz/250 ft ²)	\$7.50/pack
Deciduous	Sugar Maple	\$2.00/tree	Rain Barrel	55 Gallon	\$75.00 each



New NRCS National Initiatives for 2012



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering three new national initiatives through its **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** this year. EQIP is a voluntary conservation program for farmers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals. With these three national initiatives, NRCS is offering farmers financial and technical assistance to implement new, energy efficient practices on their operations. **The 3 new initiatives are:**

Organic

NRCS helps organic growers and producers working to achieve organic certification install conservation practices to realize increased conservation benefits on their farms. These conservation practices can address many natural resource concerns. Some examples of practices are installing buffers along waterways, improving waste utilization, or improving irrigation efficiency. By doing this, NRCS can help those operations with an Organic System Plan to fulfill many of their requirements.

On-Farm Energy

NRCS and producers develop Agricultural Energy Management Plans or farm energy audits that assess energy consumption on an operation. NRCS then uses audit data to develop energy conservation recommendations. These recommendations can include changing to LED light bulbs and insulating farm buildings, among other improvements.

Seasonal High Tunnels

NRCS helps producers plan and implement high tunnels, steel-framed, polyethylene-covered structures that extend growing seasons of high value crops in an environmentally safe manner. High tunnel benefits include better plant and soil quality, fewer nutrients and pesticides in the environment, and better air quality due to fewer vehicles being needed to transport crops. More than 4,000 high tunnels have been planned and implemented nationwide through this initiative over the past two years. This is the first year it is being offered in Indiana.

There will be two more rounds of funding offered for these initiatives this year. The application cutoffs are March 30th and June 1st. If you are interested in applying or have questions about the initiatives or EQIP in general, please give the office a call at 574-291-7444 Ext. 3.

Planting Mishap or Experiment at Work?

What's going on? Radishes, clovers, ryegrass, oats, cereal rye, alfalfa, and more all planted in the same place, at the same time? Is it some kind of sick experiment? Why yes, that is exactly what it is! On September 23, 2011, the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation Partnership planted a cover crop test plot for your viewing pleasure. We invite you to come see the test plot at Randy Ehninger's farm on Orange Rd. just north of Adams Rd. on April 4th at 4PM. Speakers will be present to talk about the pros/cons of the 12 various species & mixes of cover crops that are planted, and also on possible techniques for termination of the cover crops. A root pit will also be dug to see where the real action is below the surface. If you would like more information on the field day, or to RSVP, please contact the St. Joseph County SWCD office at 574-291-7444 Ext. 3.

The SWCD's cover crop test plot ties in with 2012's special emphasis on promoting the benefits of SOIL HEALTH. Along this line, on February 22, 2012, the SWCD hosted a Producers' Breakfast & Pesticide Recertification Meeting at the Greene Township Community Building in South Bend. Soil health-related topics included the benefits of filter strips, a panel discussion on "It's Not You Fathers No-Till, and a session called, "What's the Big Deal with Soil Health?"



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Jim LaFree, Vice Chair
Jeremy Cooper, Member
Stacey Silvers, Member
Paul Williams, III, Member

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Dave Craft
Jan Ivkovich
John Kulwicki
Melvin Kulwicki
Charles Lehman
Joe Long
Randy Matthys
Eugene Myers
Carole Riewe
Richard Schmidt
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Dale Stoner
Dave Vandewalle
Dru Wrasse

Honorary Members:

Bernard Byrd
Al Gostola
Jerry Knepp
Keith Lineback
William Millar

52nd Annual Meeting Wrap-Up

The St. Joseph County SWCD held our 2011 Annual Meeting on January 27, 2012 at St. Hedwig Memorial Center in South Bend. About 165 community members attended the Annual Meeting, including **Congressman and Mrs. Joe Donnelly, Senator and Mrs. Jim Arnold, and County Commissioner Dave Thomas.** Conservation Award Winners were: Conservation Farmer of the Year - **Whitmer Farms**; Forestry Development - **Dr. Bryan Whipperman**; state-level "Supervisor of the Year Award" - **Carole Riewe**; state-level "River Friendly Farmer" Awards - **Mike Burkholder & John Dooms**; state-level "Friend of Conservation" Nominee - **Kathleen Petitjean**; and Tenure Awards to SWCD Board Members - **Joe Long, 25 years & John Dooms, 30 years.** The Annual Financial Report was presented by Associate Supervisor, **Arlene Schuchman.** **Brett Eastburn** of No Boundaries, Inc. gave an unforgettable and inspirational presentation on overcoming obstacles. Attendees participated in the annual Supervisor election, selecting **Jeremy Cooper** as a St. Joseph County SWCD Supervisor (3 year term). **Stacey Silvers** was also introduced as our newest Appointed-Supervisor, also for a 3-year term.

Thank you to everyone involved in making our 52nd Annual Meeting a success!

Office Staff:

Debbie Knepp, NRCS
Amanda Kautz, NRCS
Rick Glassman, SWCD
Andrew Fox, SWCD
Lisa Wynn, SWCD

Farm Service Agency Staff:

Doug Hovermale, District
Director
Abby Curtis, Acting CED
Linda Bentele
Jenny Brosius

OUR MISSION

To provide guidance and education to the youth and adults of St. Joseph County and to administer programs to preserve, protect and improve soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources for future generations.