Volume IV 2009, January

ALLEN CO SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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8th Annual 2009 Tri-State Conservation Farming Expo

February 25, 2009
Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Museum,
Auburn, IN
Doors open 7:00 a.m.
Program Begins 7:45 a.m.

This year's Expo, themed *"Balancing Inputs, Yield and Conservation"* will feature presenters from across the tri-state area who have knowledge and expertise on agricultural economics, cover crops, pesticide management and soil quality.

Speakers for the program include Christopher Hurt, Purdue University Ag Economist, Jim Moseley, former Deputy Secretary of Ag, local farm owner/operator John Nidlinger, Ken Steffey, Univ. of Illinois, Extension Entomologist, Brian Mitchem, Pioneer Agronomist, and Barry Fisher, NRCS, State Agronomist.

The registration fee is $20 which includes admission to the ACD Museum, a continental breakfast & a hot lunch. Continuing education credits for private pesticide applicators, commercial applicators and Certified Crop Advisors will be offered at the Expo for an additional fee of $10. For more information or for tickets please call (260) 484-5848.

2nd Annual Allen County SWCD Tree Seedling Sale

The Allen County SWCD is holding its 2nd Annual Tree Seedling Sale. A Tree order form is included with this newsletter or you can order online at www.allenswcd.org. The deadline for ordering trees is March 6th, 2009. Pickup is Saturday, April 4th, 2009 at Salomon Farm Park on Dupont Road. On site workshops will also be offered on tree planting and proper tree care.

For more information, contact Bridget Witte at 260-484-5848 x3.

64th Allen County SWCD Annual Meeting
March 10, 2009 at 6:30 PM
Metea County Park

The 64th annual meeting for the Allen County Soil & Water Conservation District will be held Tuesday, March 10, 2009 at Metea County Park, 8401 Union Chapel Rd, Fort Wayne, IN. The Annual meeting will begin at 6:30 PM with a grilled tenderloin supper followed by a brief business meeting, a recap of the 2008 Annual Business Plan, award presentations and supervisor election. The evening will conclude with guest speakers Jane Hardisty and Donn Werling. Jane Hardisty will bring news on the conservation opportunities included with the new Farm Bill. Donn will have a presentation on the development of Allen County, particularly the Great Black Swamp and our agricultural legacy. Donn is the Director-Emeritus of the Ft. Wayne-Allen County Historical Society (a.k.a., the History Center). Donn's past is filled with awareness and restoration successes, including the River Rouge Project in the Detroit, MI area. He continues this legacy by helping foster the fledgling Maumee River Valley Heritage Corridor Society.



Jane Hardisty, NRCS State Conservationist



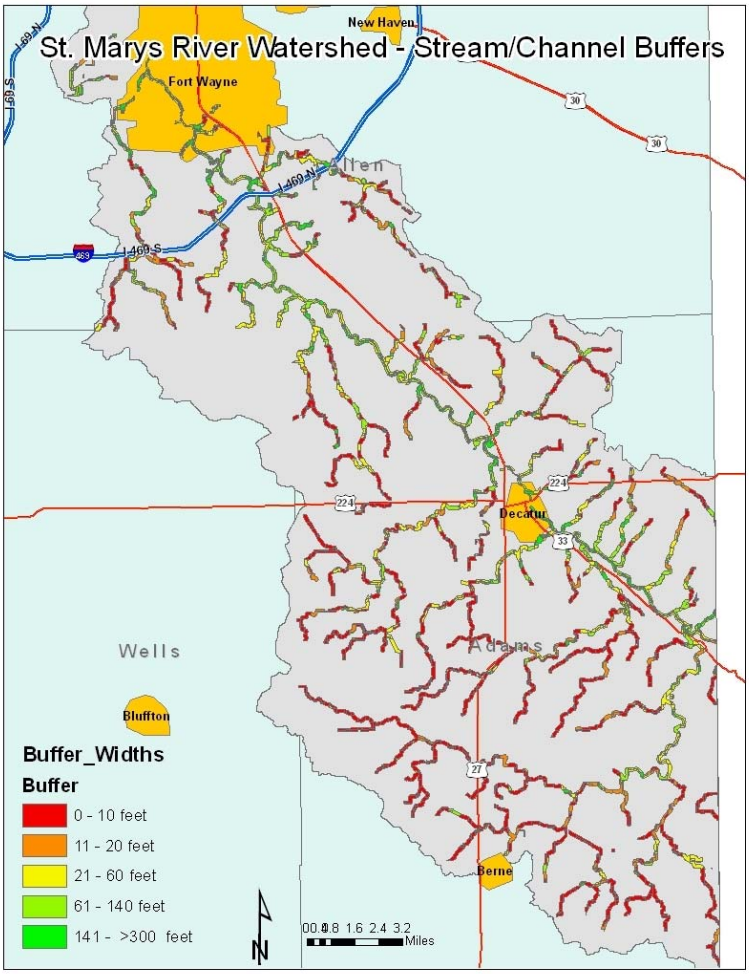
Donn Werling

St. Mary's River Watershed Stream Buffer Inventory

During the cold months of December and January, the St. Mary's River Watershed Project took some time to complete a watershed wide inventory of existing stream buffers in the watershed. “This is something that we have been wanting to do for some time, with this new “tool” we can now identify some priority areas in the watershed” stated Clint Nester, Project Manager for the St. Mary's River Watershed.

The inventory was completed by utilizing GIS software and aerial photographs. Existing stream buffers were measured and recorded for each land parcel. “We found that at least 50% of parcels have a 20 foot wide buffer or less, so from a water quality standpoint, we have some work to do in the watershed” said Clint Nester. The following table shows results of the inventory.

St. Mary's River Watershed Buffer Inventory		
	0 – 10 feet	978 Parcels (41%)
	11 – 20 feet	221 Parcels (9%)
	21 – 60 feet	450 Parcels (19%)
	61 – 140 feet	396 Parcels (17%)
	141 – 300 feet	344 Parcels (14%)



Using the mapping capabilities of the GIS software, maps were generated to show stream buffers in the watershed. “The maps tell the story, they point us to where we need to focus our efforts in the watershed” said Greg Lake, Director of the Allen County SWCD.

For more information on the buffer inventory contact Clint Nester at 260.484.5845 x115.

2008 Farm Bill Programs Almost Here!

The conservation provisions in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) will provide conservation opportunities for farmers and ranchers for years to come. The new provisions build on the conservation gains made by farmers and ranchers through the 1985, 1996 and 2002 Farm Bills. They simplify existing programs and create new programs to address high priority environmental goals.

Included in the new Farm Bill are the following existing programs: Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Existing Conservation Security Program (CSP) contracts will continue to be funded, however the program has been changed somewhat and renamed Conservation Stewardship Program.

A new program may be available to parts of Allen County called Healthy Forest Reserve Program, which is designed to encourage maintenance and enhancements to forest lands that are actively managed for timber and wildlife.

More details about the new farm bill is available on line at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2008/index.html .

Locally, you can contact Sherman Liechty, Tony Tate or Cassandra Vondran at (260) 484-5848.

Applications for these programs are taken on an on-going basis. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

A Familiar Face Returns to the Allen County SWCD Office



Cassandra Vondran
Resource Specialist
Team Leader

A new employee recently was recently hired to replace the WLEB (Western Lake Erie Basin) position previously held by Ross Egenolf.

Cassandra Vondran worked out of the Allen Co SWCD office from 1998—2005 as a Resource Specialist and has returned to our office as a Resource Specialist Team Leader. Her position is funded by the ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation and she will be primarily covering the Maumee and St. Mary's watersheds located in Allen County and the St. Joseph watershed in Allen and DeKalb counties.

Cassandra and her husband have a small livestock farm in southeast Allen County. They practice managed grazing with Boer goats, cattle and chickens.

If you have questions about grazing or other conservation practices or programs, please give her a call at the office at 260-484-5848 ext 112.

Phillips Harrows Available for Rent

Allen County SWCD has two 43" Phillips Harrow available for rent. Rental fees are $6.00 per acre up to 200 acres, $4.50 for all acres over 200. Plus if the invoice is paid within 10 days, an additional $1.00 discount applies to the entire invoice. Call Jason or Greg to schedule your rental today at 260-484-5848.



NRCS Offers Easement Funds for Flooded Fields

INDIANAPOLIS, It has been several months since farm fields in Indiana suffered huge damages from some of the most significant rainstorms and flooding ever in the Midwest. Last summer, as the flood waters receded, farmers were in their fields surveying damages and replanting drowned crops. In some fields the damages were so great that it will take years and great expense to restore them to adequate levels of productivity.

"We have seen places here in Indiana where flooding losses happen frequently enough, and productivity is low enough that they are not worth the investment it takes to continue to farm them," says State Conservationist Jane Hardisty, of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "We have an opportunity to offer farmers who find themselves in that situation." "There are two conservation programs in which funding has been authorized to purchase easements on farmlands where flooding is a problem. We anticipate receiving significant dollars for both the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and the Floodplain Easement Program (FEP) in 2009. The eligibility requirements are slightly different in the two programs, but this is an excellent time to enroll fields or parts of fields where flooding or flood damages have made crop production marginal," says Hardisty.

For the Floodplain Easement Program, land qualifies if it has been flooded at least once in the past 12 months, or twice in the past 10 years. In the Wetlands Reserve Program, land qualifies if it would have been considered a wetland area before it was converted to agricultural production.

Under both programs, NRCS buys easements on lands to remove them from production agriculture. Once the easements are in place, NRCS may do some restoration work to put the land back into floodplain use or wetland conditions. Restoration work is paid up to 100% by NRCS, and helps retain flood waters in floodplains and associated areas, restore water quality, and provide habitats for wildlife.

Easement compensation is based on a cap set for each county, and the land is valued either as cropland or non-cropland. Interested landowners can get more information and apply by visiting NRCS at the local USDA Service Center (Allen County Office) More information can be found on-line at http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ under "Easement Programs." In Allen County call 260-484-5848 ext 3 and ask for Sherman Liechty.

USDA Service Center locations can be found at: http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app

Contacts:
Jane E. Hardisty, NRCS State Conservationist, (317) 290-3200
Michael McGovern, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist, (317) 290-3200, ext. 324
Sherman Liechty NRCS District Conservationist Allen County (260)484-5848
Helping People Help the Land



EQIP Sign-up Underway - Energy Bundle Option Available for 2009

Currently Indiana has received its allocation of 2008 EQIP monies. EQIP is the NRCS program that pays for structural projects on farm land as well as incentive type payments. Outlined below is just an example of what EQIP Incentives can do for you. There are many other options available.

No-till/Strip-till (minimum 2 years corn)	20.00/acre	500 acre maximum
High level Nutrient management (VRT)[1]	20.00/acre	500 acre maximum
Cover crops	22.50/acre	Unlimited acres
Bundling fee Bonus[1]	20.00/acre	1,000 acre maximum
Pest management[1,2]	4.00/acre	500 acre maximum
	86.50/acre	

5 year contract required
[1]Eligible only on non-CSP acres
[2]Pest management not required for bundling bonus
--500 acre operation, based on doing all practices described above:
500 acres x 86.50/acre = 43,250.00/year x 3 years 129,750.00

--1000 acre operation, based on doing all practices described above on first 500 acres & additional 500 acres doing everything listed above, but only eligible for payment on Cover Crops @ $22.50/acre & Bundling fee @ $20.00/acre

1st 500 acres x 86.50/acre = 43,250.00/year x 3 years	129,750.00
2nd 500 acres x 42.50/acre = 21,250.00/year x 3 years	63,750.00
Total Payment	193,500.00

Remember any of the individual EQIP practices can be installed individually up to their maximum acres. There are many other options including programs for livestock operations, tree plantings, etc. available. For specifics on how this could work for you please contact the office and ask for Sherman, Tony, or Cassandra.

Fall 2008 Great for Strip-till

Good weather last fall was great for strip-till in northeast Indiana. The St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative and the Allen County SWCD strip-till rental program doubled the acres in 2008 compared to 2007. We did a combined total of 3,066 acres for 16 area farmers. Adams County SWCD also started a strip-till program in 2008 and did 1,464 acres.



Southeast Allen county farmer Tom Franke was one of the farmers that tried strip-till. When asked why Tom tried strip-till he said one main reason was for erosion control. Tom like many area conventional corn farmers saw a lot of soil erosion from the 2007 winter and did not like seeing his nutrient rich top soil washing away. Tom also liked the fewer trips across the field he would have to make, saving time, fuel, soil compaction, and wear on equipment. Tom was very happy with the strip-till we did for him and is looking forward to seeing the benefits this spring.

ALLEN CO SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Bridget Witte—Administrative Assistant

Matthew Jones—Water Resources Education Specialist

Clint Nester—St Mary's Watershed Program Manager

Jason Buuck—Agronomy Technician

NRCS

Sherman Liechty—District Conservationist

Tony Tate—Soil Conservationist

ISDA

Cassandra Vondran—Resource Specialist Team Leader



Coming Events

February 25·····Tri-State Conservation Farming Expo
March 6 ·····Allen SWCD Tree Sale Order Deadline
March 10·····Allen Co SWCD Annual Meeting
April 4 ·····Tree Sale Pickup @ Salomon Farm Park
May 30·····Hoosier RiverWatch Workshop
June 17·····Hoosier RiverWatch Workshop

The Allen County SWCD Board of Supervisors meet on the 4th Tuesday of each month. The public is welcome.

Call the Allen County SWCD office at (260) 484-5848 Ext 3 for more information on any of these events.