THE CONSERVATION CHALLENGE

ISSUE 52
December 2023

@allenswcd @AllenCountySoilandWater www.allenswcd.org 260.484.5848 ext. 3

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Gabe Curtis
Watershed Project Manager

Rhiannon Lake
Conservation Programs Specialist

Mark Rekeweg
Conservation Programs Specialist

Jesus Rosario
Conservation Programs Specialist

NRCS
Tim Bomba
District Conservationist

Brooke Rudicel
Soil Conservationist

ISDA
Lindsey Bluhm
Resource Specialist

Sandra Hoffarth
District Support Specialist

2023 was a busy and productive year for Allen County Soil and Water Conservation District! Thank you to all who attended or contributed to our workshops and events. We look forward to serving you in 2024!

Field Days and Workshops

The Allen County SWCD hosted and exhibited at over 30 events in 2023. Like many other years, 2023 started off with the Fort Wayne Farm Show. Farm Show was followed by our Annual Meeting then Going Green for Ag. Our Annual Soil Health Field Day brought together nearly 200 producers, retailers and community members to further discussions on soil health practices and nutrient management. Throughout the summer we partnered with the Maumee Watershed Alliance to offer pontoon eco tours to producers, retailers, and community members.

Trips to Lake Erie

Our Day at the Lake allowed us to take 50 community members out to Lake Erie via Toledo to gain further knowledge on this delicate ecosystem. The District once again partnered with the Maumee Watershed Alliance for Stay at the Bay. Stay at the Bay brought agricultural producers and retailers together to further discuss the challenges facing the Western Lake Erie Basin and the steps we need to take going forward.

Urban and Small Farms Program

Through our Urban and Small Farms program the Allen County SWCD was able to host events at our Bloomingdale Gardens project site on cover crop planting, maintenance and termination, mulching, composting, and garden planting. Thank you to Chris and Vonda Walker for allowing us to partner with you on the Bloomingdale Gardens Project. You can visit the garden year around at 420 High Street, Fort Wayne.
Our Urban and Small Farms program provided soil testing and technical assistance to 24 growers in Allen County.

New Hires

This year Allen County Soil & Water Conservation District brought on 3 new Conservation Program Specialists. Welcome to the team Rhiannon Lake, Jesus Rosario, and Mark Rekeweg!

Allen County Soil and Water Conservation District
9602 Coldwater Road, Suite 104
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Wishing you a happy holiday and a happy new year from the SWCD, NRCS, and ISDA!

Greg Courtney Mikila Gabriel Rhiannon
Jesus Mark Tim Brooke Lindsey Sandra

All programs and services of the Allen County SWCD are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, sex, gender identification, sexual orientation, national origin, native language, religion, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, pregnancy, or any other characteristic protected by law.

Adopting New Technology for Conservation

By Rhiannon Lake

I enjoy looking at old black and white photos of my great-grandparent's farm, like seeing my grandpa on a tractor pulling a wagon full of loose hay. It gives me a glimpse into the days of when farms were smaller and managed more on a micro-level, or on a field by field basis. Farming has definitely evolved a lot since the days that my great-grandparents farmed, however, the new age of precision farming may allow crop fields to be managed similar to that used by past generations. Precision farming aims to match inputs and practices to localized conditions within a field accomplished with digital technology tools, such as satellites, drones, and sensors. The advantages are maximizing crop returns with minimum amounts of input cost for the farmer, while potentially protecting the environment by only applying a precise quantity of inputs when and where needed.

Seeing the potential opportunities in this new technology, Allen County SWCD purchased an advanced imagery drone with multispectral sensors back in July 2023. The objectives for the SWCD drone are providing technical assistance to farmers adopting conservation practices and an additional tool to complement our soil sampling and nutrient management plans. Additional conservation work for the drone will likely occur as more opportunities arise.

My main goal for the SWCD drone this summer was to test it out and see the possibilities it could provide to farmers. In addition, identifying a drone mapping software that is feasible in price and includes all the layers of data (i.e plant health) we are interested in providing to farmers. I was able to fly several conservation fields and one with a conventional tillage field right next to it to see if there were any differences in the imagery data. I have been uploading the drone images into several software programs throughout the season and already can see how beneficial the drone imagery can and will be for farmers. I am in the process of finalizing the results, so stay tuned for the next newsletter to find out!

Farewell to Joelle Neff

Joelle Neff, Watershed Project Manager, has left the District to pursue a career with Natural Resources Conservation Service. Joelle was a huge resource to the District and we are sure that she will quickly become an asset to NRCS. We are so sad to see her go but wish the best for her in the future.

Joelle, THANK YOU for all you brought to the Allen County SWCD. We will miss your work ethic, passion for conservation, and skills, but most of all we will miss the positivity and joy you brought to District and Thankful Thursdays! We will continue the tradition in your absence. Thank you for your service to the District and best of luck in all you do!







FORT WAYNE FARM SHOW

January 16-18, 2024
Allen County War Memorial Coliseum

Major Farm Manufacturing and Distributor Trade Show

January 16	9 AM - 5 PM
January 17	9 AM - 8 PM
January 18	9 AM - 4 PM

Tuesday, January 16 Appleseed Room A

10:00 a.m.
Midwest Ag Market Outlook
Jon Cavanaugh
WOWO Market Analyst
David Kohli
WOWO Market Analyst
Ryan Martin
Farm Origination Specialist,
Louis Dreyfus Co.
Rob Winters
Farm Director,
News/Talk 1190, WOWO

11:30 a.m.
How Farmers Can Take Advantage of Global Climate Action
Carrie Vollmer-Sanders
Sustainability Director,
U.S. Farmers & Ranchers in Action

2:00 p.m.
Pesticide Applicator Program
PARP, CCH Credits Available
James Wolff
Ag & Natural Resources Educator, County Extension Director,
Purdue Extension, Allen County
Christian Krupke,
Professor of Entomology,
Purdue University
Ann Klein
Extension Educator,
Purdue Extension, Noble County

Wednesday, January 17 Appleseed Room A

9:00 a.m.
Coffee and... The Demand for Regenerative Ag (Breakfast Served)
Noah Radde
Grain Origination Specialist,
ADM

11:30 a.m. (Luncheon)
Hot Topics in Land Use
Appleseed Room B
Brianna Schroeder
Partner,
Janzen Schroeder Ag Law

2:00 p.m.
New Technology in Conservation
Rhiannon Lake
Conservation Program Specialist,
Allen County SWCD
Adam Shanks
Extension Educator - ANR,
Purdue Extension, Clinton County

5:30 p.m.
Back By Popular Demand: Five Ways to Lose the Family Farm
Dan Gordon
Owner, Attorney,
Gordon Legal

Thursday, January 18 Appleseed Room A

10:00 a.m.
Cultivating Resiliency: Financial Incentives for Environmental Stewardship with the Soil and Water Outcomes Fund® (Breakfast Served)
Indiana Soybean Alliance, Indiana Corn Marketing Council, Soil and Water Outcomes Fund

11:00 a.m.
Insurance & Agritourism
Mike Lampton
Agent,
Indiana Farm Bureau

12:30 p.m.
Office Hours: Meet Your Agency Staff
CCSI
Farm Service Agency
Indiana State Department of Ag
Local SWCDS
Local Watershed Organizations
NRCS
OCRA
Purdue University Extension

Be sure to visit our booths on the lower level, Expo Hall 4

Save the Date!



ANNUAL MEETING

Pancake & Sausage Breakfast

8:00 a.m. Saturday, February 24, 2024
Hosted by: Tim & Deanna Rorick
4710 S. Webster Rd. New Haven, IN 46774

Allen County Soil & Water Conservation District