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From Your District

As winter comes to an end and we begin to think spring, keep in mind that the Allen County SWCD is a resource to you and the community. We offer free soil testing and technical assistance. We can connect you with resources and programs available to your specific needs. Our dedicated staff would love the opportunity to meet with you and discuss your operation, whether you are a large scale producer or a community gardener, we are here to help.

Smart Soils Initiative

Adopting New Technology for Conservation Part II, Rhiannon Lake

As you may remember from my previous article in the December 2023 issue, I introduced Allen County SWCD had purchased an advanced, multi-spectral drone for the growing season. The end results from the multispectral imagery proved that the drone is a useful tool for assisting farmers in their management decisions related to conservation practices. The drone is like a "visual diary" and can document how the cover crop impacted the cash crop during the growing season. For instance, the drone was able to capture the difference in crop health between a conservation field and a conventional till field neighboring each other (Image 1). I am also in the process of building soil moisture and temperature sensors as an additional source of data collection technologies to assist farmers in their conservation management practices.

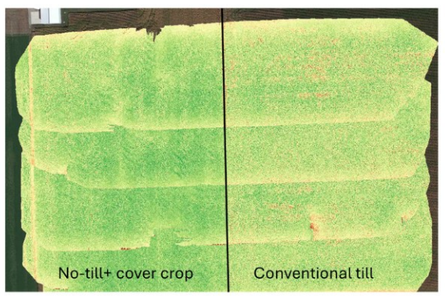


Image 1. Stitched photo with crop health (NDVI) overlay of two fields with different management practices. Drone flight was on 8/28/2023.

Based on all the positive results that we have seen from adopting these new technologies, we have developed a new program called the "Smart Soils Initiative" utilizing these new technologies to provide technical assistance to farmers with questions and/or concerns regarding conservation management practices. It is a no-cost, free service to farmers located in Allen County, Indiana with the main objective of providing data-driven answers to farmers tailored to their own farm. If interested in learning more about this exciting new program, please feel free to contact me via phone (260-484-5848 ext. 8425) or email me at rlake.swcd@gmail.com.

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

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.

Allen County Soil & Water Conservation District

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

Clean Water Indiana

Larry Clemens
State Director, The Nature Conservancy; State Soil Conservation Board

Rainfall, Runoff, Climate Change, and Floodplain Mapping

Rod Renkenberger, Director, Maumee River Basin Commission
Michael Fruchey, Allen County Surveyor

FREE

For more information and a complete agenda visit ALLENSWCD.ORG or call (260) 484-5848 ext.3

Look Who's New



Elyssa Lewis

Watershed Program Manager
Urban & Small Farms Program
elewis.swcd@gmail.com
(260) 484-5484 ext. 3

My passion for cultivating plants has led me on an incredible journey. Recently, I joined Allen County SWCD as a Watershed Project Manager with a focus on urban and small farms. I am excited to help with conservation efforts to monitor water quality and promote soil health in the Allen County community. I am eager to learn more about the local food chain and help improve the livelihoods of urban and small farmers.

Before joining this team of dedicated professionals, I studied at Purdue West Lafayette in the Horticulture Department in the major of Sustainable Farming Systems for a Bachelor of Science. There, I learned a holistic approach to farming in soil, plant, and animal sciences with hands on experiences in all arenas. For two years, I worked at the Purdue Horticultural Greenhouses. There I learned about many topics including integrated pest management which used scouting to determine which beneficials to use to mitigate pest pressure. I also learned about plant propagation which I discovered was one of my passions. Making more plants from existing plants provides great joy. The most extraordinary experience happened in my animal science lab class at the sheep unit where I was able to help a sheep give birth. Since I had no livestock experience and had long been interested in keeping sheep for fiber, this was an experience that helped solidify my confidence in husbandry skills.

As a returning adult student, I brought many life and work experiences to supplement my education. I've worked at Arbor Farms Nursery, helping customers choose plants for their landscapes. I have also completed the Urban Agriculture Certificate from Purdue Extension, learning about the intricacies of starting and operating an urban farm. Before I returned to school, I lived in Oregon for ten years where I had devoted my free time to self-education and had several mentors in a variety of topics like weaving, yarn spinning, bicycle mechanics, and cooking.

I would love to connect with community members to help create a more resilient food system within our community. I also would love to see more green spaces within our community. Please reach out to get connected to resources to elevate your conservation game. Looking forward to collaborating!

North East Indiana Farmer Forum

ADM re:generations

Going Green for Ag

Maumee Watershed Alliance
partnerships for healthy rivers

Allen County Soil & Water Conservation District

Join ADM re:generations, The Maumee Watershed Alliance, and Allen County Soil & Water Conservation District in Decatur, Indiana for a Farmer Forum. Learn more about the latest in cover crops, and what new incentives will be available.

Thursday, March 14th 2024

Zion- Friedheim Lutheran Church Family Life Center, 10653 N 550 W Decatur, IN 46733

Agenda

PARP, CCH, CEU Credits Available!

8:30 AM- Coffee, Conversation & Registration

9:00 AM- Introductions and ADM re:generations Update
Hear from Allen County SWCD, ADM and Ducks Unlimited on 2024 Program offerings

9:30 AM- Maximizing Cover Cropping Success: Barry Fisher

11:00 AM- The Economics of a Systems Approach: Rodney Rulon

12:00 PM- Lunch (provided)

12:45 PM- Small Round Table Discussions
Breakout session led by our speakers and local conservation leaders focusing on topics based on your voting preferences at registration of the event.

2:00 PM- Wrap Up

About our Keynote Speakers

Barry Fisher is President of Fisher Soil Health LLC, a well-known and accredited organization that "provides training and advanced soil health management systems strategies to Ag professional and Farmers. " He has a previous tenure as a farmer and long-term Conservation Soil Health specialist with the NRCS. Barry has a vast understanding of the systems approach to soil health and has been an excellent resource for growers on this journey for over 30 years.

Rodney Rulon is Part owner of Rulon Enterprises of Arcadia, IN, a large commercial operation that has been focusing on combining conservation and economic efficiencies for well over 30 years. What sets the Rulons' apart is their ability to collect and meticulously interpret their farms' data. For 30 years Rulon's have shown the economic value of keeping soil in place and using a systems approach to build soil health, and we are lucky to have Rodney here to speak on just that.

Registration is requested. Register HERE

If you have any questions please email us at allenswcd@gmail.com, call 260.484.5848 ext. 3 or visit www.allenswcd.org

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative

PURDUE UNIVERSITY Extension

The USDA, Allen County SWCD, and its partners are equal opportunity employers, lenders and providers.