

# Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District



## Summer 2015



Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)  
10165 Oxford Pike  
Brookville, IN 47012  
(765) 647-2651, ext. 3

[www.franklincountyswcd.org](http://www.franklincountyswcd.org)

*\*Due to the nature of our work there will be times the office must be closed. Please call ahead before visiting.*

### **District Supervisors:**

Michael Schwab – Chairman  
David Hartman – Vice-Chairman  
Louis Schwegman – Secretary  
Darin Hodapp – Supervisor  
Tim Hofer – Supervisor

### **Associate Supervisors:**

Roger Bommer  
Lee Giesting  
Clinton McNally  
Eugene Meyer  
John Selm

### **Conservation Staff:**

Evan Divine – *NRCS*  
Chris Fox – *SWCD*

The SWCD Board of Supervisors meets on the third Wednesday of each month starting at 7:30 p.m. The public is invited to attend.

**July 15\*    August 19    Sept 16**

### **Need to test your well water?**

The SWCD has bottles for collecting water samples to test for various pollutants. The cost for testing starts at \$25. For more information contact the SWCD office.



## Whitewater River Watershed Project Update

The steering committee and staff have worked very hard for the past year collecting data about the watershed. The Whitewater River Watershed is a very unique and diverse area in Indiana and Ohio. It is the home of many endangered species and needs to be protected. The river itself is a wonderful asset and known for its fishing and recreational uses, like canoeing. One of the most important reasons that people should care about the water quality of the Whitewater River is the large aquifer that lies under the watershed which supplies drinking water to a large number of people in the surrounding counties.

The watershed staff and steering committee are in the process of drafting a Water Management Plan (WMP) for the Whitewater River Watershed. The WMP includes all of the data which was collected along with water quality goals, an action plan of reaching the goals, and identified priority areas to focus on improving and protecting the water quality. When the WMP is completed, it will be a valuable resource and reference document. The watershed group plans on using the WMP document in the future to secure funding for a cost-share

program and to continue its educational efforts. The cost-share program would provide funds to help landowners in the watershed install best management practices on their property to help improve and protect the water quality of the Whitewater River and its watershed.



Have you seen the new signs posted in the watershed? Over 30 watershed signs have been installed along the many tributaries in both Franklin and Dearborn counties.



Whitewater River Watershed

June 15-21, was National Pollinator Week. Pollinators are critical to the health of the environment and crop production. Without pollinators, we would lose a third of the foods in our diets, including many fruits, nuts and vegetables. In California, 60% of the U.S. honey bee colonies are used for almond pollination annually, totaling more than 1.5 million colonies. See the “Protecting Pollinators” article inside this newsletter to learn about the national pollinator strategy.

## Protecting Pollinators:

Pollinator health is a high priority national issue due to significant colony losses experienced by U.S. beekeepers. The national pollinator strategy has three overarching goals:

- **Honey Bees:** Reduce honey bee colony losses during winter (overwintering mortality) to no more than 15% within 10 years.
- **Monarch Butterflies:** Increase the Eastern monarch population to 225 million butterflies occupying an area of approximately 15 acres (6 hectares) in the overwintering grounds in Mexico, through domestic/international actions and public-private partnerships, by 2020.
- **Pollinator Habitat Acreage:** Restore or enhance 7 million acres of land for pollinators over the next 5 years through federal actions and public/private partnerships.

Additionally, the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is committed to using \$4 million from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to create habitat for honey bees in the Northern Plains and Upper Midwest. This is in addition to \$8 million set aside by the Farm Service Agency to incentivize honey bee forage plantings in the Upper Midwest, and the enrollment of an additional 76,000 acres in high-value pollinator habitat nationwide. Indiana has drafted a Pollinator Protection Plan (P3) to help identify activities that can improve pollinator health. The primary goal of the Indiana P3 is to bring awareness to the issues faced by pollinators and all related stakeholders and to serve as a starting point to develop a blueprint of how each stakeholder group might contribute to the task of improving pollinator health.

## Additional 800,000 Acres Dedicated to Conservation Reserve Program

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Thomas Vilsack, recently announced the addition of 800,000 acres of highly environmentally sensitive land to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for Wildlife Habitat and Wetlands. The voluntary program allows the USDA to contract with farmers and ranchers interested in removing sensitive land from agricultural production to instead plant grasses or trees to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and restore wildlife habitat. In return, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance.

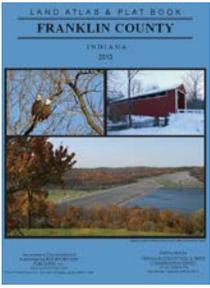
The USDA will accept new offers to participate in CRP under a general signup to be held Dec. 1, 2015, through Feb. 26, 2016. Eligible existing program participants with contracts expiring in September, will be granted an option for one-year extensions.

Included in the 2014 Farm Bill reauthorization of CRP is the enrollment of grasslands. More information on grasslands enrollment will be available after the regulation is published later this summer. Check out the USDA website for more information on CRP or contact your local USDA Farm Service Agency office.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has done a lot of great things for water quality and wildlife habitat over the years. There has been financial assistance available to build grassed waterways in erosive crop fields, plant filterstrips and riparian buffers along watercourses, and to establish native grasses in entire crop fields or field edges. While these practices require less upkeep than your traditional crop fields, they still require maintenance to function properly.

As you are in the fields this summer take some time to look over your CRP practices to determine what maintenance needs to be done. Typical grassed waterway issues include tile holes, gully erosion, width encroachment and noxious weeds (Canada thistle, johnson grass, etc.). It is also important to remember that you cannot mow your grassed waterways or filterstrips during the nesting season, which is **April 1<sup>st</sup> – August 1<sup>st</sup>**. An exception to this is if your waterway or filterstrip is less than 3 years old – they can be mowed at any time to help with establishment. You can also spray noxious weeds at any time during the first 3 years after construction, but in order to spray any time after that you will need to request permission from the Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee.

While CRP practices are a great tool to address resource concerns, if left unmaintained they sometimes no longer have the desired effect. As a CRP participant you are obligated to maintain your practices throughout the life of the contract. If you have any questions about CRP practice maintenance contact **Evan Divine, NRCS District Conservationist**, at (765) 647-2651 Ext. 3.



## Plat Book For Sale

The Franklin County plat book is full color and includes aerial photos of each township. The books sell for \$25 each, cash or check only.



Over one million North Americans put up housing for Purple Martins. These acrobatic fliers will readily use man-made houses or gourds and seem to prefer to nest in groups or colonies. Despite the abundance of housing, martins still face stiff competition with non-native species like the European Starling and house sparrows. If you are not familiar with this backyard bird here are a few interesting facts to consider. Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) are the largest member of the swallow family, measuring 7 1/2 inches long and weighing 1.9 ounces. Purple Martins spend the breeding season in North America and then migrate south for the winter to Bolivia, Brazil and other regions of South America. The majority of the eastern martin population migrates via Central America or down the Florida peninsula southward through the Florida Keys, Bahamas, and the Greater Antilles to the South American coastline. This is an amazing migration for such a familiar bird. East of the Rockies they are totally dependent on human-supplied housing. West of the Rockies and in the deserts they largely nest in their ancestral ways, in abandoned woodpecker nest cavities. In the Pacific Northwest,

martins are beginning to use gourds and clusters of single-unit boxes. Hundreds of years ago Native Americans placed hollowed-out gourds on poles for the martins to use. Martins returned the favor by controlling flies and wasps around the village. Martins, like all swallows, are aerial insectivores. They eat only flying insects, which they catch in flight. Their diet is diverse, including dragonflies, damselflies, flies, midges, mayflies, stinkbugs, leafhoppers, Japanese beetles, June bugs, butterflies, moths, grasshoppers, cicadas, bees, wasps, flying ants, and ballooning spiders. Martins are not, however, prodigious consumers of mosquitoes as is so often claimed by companies that manufacture martin housing. Purple Martins and freshwater mosquitoes rarely ever cross paths. Martins are daytime feeders, and feed high in the sky; mosquitoes, on the other hand, stay low in damp places during daylight hours, or only come out at night. Although martins may not consume a lot of mosquitos, they do play an important role in a healthy ecosystem...and they do eat many insects considered to be pests. So, if you are interested in attracting Purple Martins to your yard consider installing a martin house or a set of gourds. Houses and gourds should be painted white, or a light pastel color. White housing seems to attract martins best. White housing reflects the heat of the sun, keeping nestlings cooler. The major reason people fail to attract martins is that they place their martin housing incorrectly. Generally, martin houses should be placed within 120 feet of human houses and the farther from trees, the better. To learn more contact our office or visit the website [www.purplemartin.org/](http://www.purplemartin.org/)



A new Monarch & pollinator garden was recently installed at Brookville Middle School with the help of the BMS 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. Thanks to Mrs. Young for the assistance and support of the project and to Spence Restoration for donating nearly 100 native plants to the school.

## Dates to Remember



**July 4: Independence Day.** Office will be closed on **July 3.**

**July 13-18:** Franklin County 4-H Fair week. See you there!

**July 15: SWCD monthly meeting at 6:30pm.** Board will meet at the **Whitcomb Pavilion** at fairgrounds.

**July 28: Invasive Forest Pest Detection Workshop,** 6-7:30pm Franklin County Govt. Center

**August 7-23:** Indiana State Fair

**August 19: SWCD monthly meeting at 7:30pm.**

**September 7: Labor Day.** Observed holiday. Office closed.

**September 16: SWCD monthly meeting at 7:30pm.**



## Upcoming Local County Fairs:

Rush Co.	June 20-27 <sup>th</sup>
Decatur Co.	July 9-16 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Franklin Co.</b>	<b>July 13-18<sup>th</sup></b>
Union Co.	July 18-23 <sup>rd</sup>
Ripley Co.	July 19-25 <sup>th</sup>
Fayette Co.	July 26-Aug 1 <sup>st</sup>
STATE FAIR	Aug 7-23 <sup>rd</sup> 



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**Wenning Farms, Inc**  
Roger Wenning  
Cover Crop Specialist  
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