# Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District

## Winter 2016

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

**Jan 20** **Feb 16*** **Mar 16**

### Need to test your well water?

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



2015 International Year of Soils

***Healthy soils for a healthy life***

*Indianapolis, IN, Dec. 3*, 2015 – As we come to the close of the *2015 International Year of the Soils*, there is no time better to reflect on the importance of soils for all Hoosiers. "Some of the best, most productive soils in the world are found in Indiana," said Jane Hardisty, State Conservationist for USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). "It's important for us to realize that our soil is a limited resource and more importantly it is alive, which makes maintaining and improving it critical to meeting our future needs for food, water and energy security." Soil is one of our greatest natural resources and it plays a very important role in our lives every day. We build on the soil—our homes, businesses, schools, roads and farms all depend on it for their foundation. But more importantly, soil is the foundation for our food, feed, fiber, and fuel production. In fact, ninety-five percent all of our food comes from the soil. Hardisty explains soil health, a relatively new concept, has farmers across the country changing the way they manage their land. "The soil is amazing! One teaspoon of healthy soil can contain a billion organisms such as bacteria and fungi, not to mention the multitudes of worms and other arthropods that live in the soil. "Everything changes when we realize soil is alive and start making decisions to support healthy soil," concludes Hardisty. "This campaign has brought focus to the importance of soil and has inspired people across the world to take a second look at their soil, think about how it impacts their lives and how to take better care of it."

## SAVE THE DATE

Join the Franklin County SWCD for their **53rd** Annual Meeting and Dinner on Tuesday, **February 16, 2016** at 6pm in the Franklin County High School cafeteria. A buffet meal will be prepared by Izzy's Catering. The keynote presenter will be **Robert Barr**, research scientist from the Center for Earth and Environmental Sciences at IUPUI. Mr. Barr's research focuses broadly on what is required to achieve and maintain healthy stream ecosystems in a continually changing landscape. Mr. Barr has extensively studied rivers and streams throughout Indiana, including the Whitewater River. In addition to the presentation there will be an election, awards ceremony and door prizes. Tickets are $9 per person. Please **RSVP** by ***February 9***. In the event of severe weather the snow date for the event is February 18th at 6pm.

# NRDC Report: Can Cover Crops Combat Climate Change and Drought?

**CHICAGO (November 19, 2015) –** As harvest season ends and farmers in the United States ready themselves for winter, one small change could make a huge difference in their soil's health and the health of our climate-impacted world: planting cover crops.

A report released today by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) finds cover crops can suck tons of carbon pollution from the air, significantly cut crop losses and prevent the loss of a trillion gallons of water. In fact, planting cover crops on half the corn and soybean acres in the top 10 agricultural states (California, Iowa, Texas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Illinois, Kansas, Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Indiana) could sequester more than 19 million metric tons of carbon annually – **the equivalent of taking more than 4 million cars off the road.**

"Extreme weather conditions such as drought and flooding are already having major impacts on farms, and they are only expected to become more common and more severe in coming years," said Ben Chou, report co-author and NRDC water policy analyst specializing in climate science. "It's going to take a global effort to slow down the rate at which our world is warming and we'll have to use every tool in our arsenal; cover crops are one of those tools."

Over the past five years, farmers in the top 10 agricultural states lost more than $25 billion worth of crops due to drought, heat, hot wind, extreme rainfall, flooding and other climate-related impacts. Scientists anticipate that climate change will result in higher numbers of consecutive dry days and hot nights, negatively affecting crop yields, especially in the western and southern parts of the country. Higher temperatures in conjunction with longer dry periods will increase crop water requirements, likely exacerbating water shortages. When it does rain, precipitation is expected to occur in heavier, more intense rainfall events, increasing the risk of soil erosion.

NRDC's report, ***Climate-Ready Soil: How Cover Crops Can Make Farms More Resilient to Extreme Weather Risks***, examines the carbon capture and water-holding benefits of soil stewardship methods to improve soil health in the 10 highest-value-producing agricultural states in the United States and includes data on annual average crop losses, as well as projected climate change impacts across the country, the effects on crops, and the benefits of cover crops.

***Climate-Ready Soil's*** analysis reveals that using cover crops and other soil stewardship practices to increase organic matter in soil by 1 percent on half of the corn and soybean acres in the top 10 agriculture states could **help the soil hold an additional trillion gallons of water**, which is enough water to meet the annual needs of nearly 33 million people.

"Whether it's the ongoing California drought or the drenching spring rains in Texas, farmers are constantly struggling to manage the water on their farms," said report co-author and Soil Health Fellow Lara Bryant. "Unfortunately, dealing with the effects of climate change is becoming the new normal, and farmers have an opportunity to be part of the solution – and that includes doing more with less water. Thankfully, investing in healthy soil is a win-win for everyone."

State-specific benefits highlighted in the report for farmers included:

- **California:** 540,000 metric tons of carbon pollution captured annually; and 10.9 billion gallons of water stored. (Click here for California fact sheet.)
- **Illinois:** 4 million metric tons of carbon pollution captured annually; and 214 billion gallons of water stored. (Click here for Illinois fact sheet.)
- **Indiana:** 2.1 million metric tons of carbon pollution captured annually; and 113 billion gallons of water stored. (Click here for Indiana fact sheet.)
- **Iowa:** 4.3 million metric tons of carbon pollution captured annually; and 234 billion gallons of water stored. (Click here for Iowa fact sheet.)
- **Kansas:** 1.4 million metric tons of carbon pollution captured annually; and 81 billion gallons of water stored. (Click here for Kansas fact sheet.)

**Background**

Cover crops are crops grown with the specific purpose of building soil health and increasing biodiversity on farms focused on growing major commodity crops. Farmers who used cover crops over the last three growing seasons have consistently averaged higher yields than farmers who did not, according to recent USDA surveys. The yield benefit from cover crops was most pronounced in the areas hardest hit by the historic Midwest drought in 2012, demonstrating the importance of cover crops in drought-proofing fields.

## Wetland Reserve Easement

The Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) Program provides financial and technical assistance to protect and restore wetland habitat. This program gives private landowners the opportunity to have an everlasting, positive impact on their property by restoring important wetland areas. Wetland Reserve Easements provide habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species; improve waterway quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reduce flooding; recharge groundwater; protect biological diversity; and provide opportunities for educational, scientific and limited recreational activities. Land eligible for WRE includes farmed or prior converted wetlands than can be successfully and cost-effectively restored. To enroll land through WRE, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) enters into a purchase agreement with an eligible private landowner that includes the right for the NRCS to develop and implement a wetland reserve restoration easement plan. This plan restores, protects, and enhances the wetland's functions and values. It is the landowner's responsibility to prove a clear title. There are two enrollment options for landowners:

- **Permanent Easements** are conservation easements in perpetuity. NRCS pays 100% of the easement value for the purchase of the easement, and between 75-100% of the restoration costs.
- **30-Year Easements** expire after 30 years. Under 30 year easements, NRCS pays 50-100% of the easement value for the purchase of the easement, and between 50-75% of the restoration costs.

For more information about WRE please contact Evan Divine, Franklin County District Conservationist.

## For the birds!

**By: Chris Fox**

I know it is not a big surprise to those that know me but I find birds fascinating. And even though I have long been a bird watcher and even worked as an ornithologist, I am still amazed at the new discoveries that scientist are continuing to discover. Researchers use many tools and techniques to study birds. Bird banding (or ringing, as it is called in Europe) has been used for centuries. The first known record of bird banding in North America was by John James Audubon in 1803. Despite the advancement in technology the process of banding has changed very little over time. There are 25 standard size bands and 5 specially sized bands to accommodate the smallest hummingbird to the largest swan. Most bands are made out of aluminum but some are made from stainless steel for birds in saltwater habitat or birds with strong beaks. Bands contain an identification number and contact information should someone find a banded bird. Because most birds are federally protected banders must apply for and receive a federal banding permit. The banding process does not harm the birds nor does the band interfere with the ability to fly. The data collected from bird banding has not only expanded the scientific knowledge but also aided in management decisions. Recapture of banded birds has helped scientists better understand bird migration. Knowing where birds migrate and what are important stop over sites are critical to protecting bird habitat. Furthermore, banding data can be used to estimate population size and individual longevity. Recently, a Bald Eagle was spotted at Lake Monroe that based on banding records is 27 years old and is one of original birds reintroduced in the state. In November, a 64 year old Laysan albatross named "Wisdom" returned to Midway Island to nest. Wisdom is the oldest living, banded, wild bird. Happy Birding!

## Dates to Remember

**December 24:** Christmas Eve! Observed holiday. **Office closed.**

**December 25:** Christmas Day! Observed holiday. **Office closed.**

**2016**

**January 1**: New Year's Day! Observed holiday. **Office closed.**

**January 14-15:** IASWCD annual conference in Indianapolis. *Limited staff available*.

**January 18:** Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday! ***Office Closed.***

**January 20: SWCD monthly meeting at 7:30pm.**

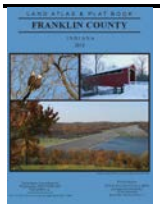
**February 6:** 10th Annual Food & Growers Conference. Batesville Intermediate School 9am-3pm. http://foodandgrowers.org/

**February 15:** Presidents Day! Observed holiday. ***Office closed.***

**February 16: 53rd Annual meeting & dinner at 6:00pm in the FCHS cafeteria.** *Please RSVP.*

**March 5:** 2nd Annual Energy Expo. Batesville Middle School Commons. *More details TBA*

**March 12: 10th Annual Conservation Tillage Breakfast & Workshop (PARP)—**8:00am at Zimmer Tractor.




**Franklin County Plat Book**

The 2013 Franklin County plat book is full color and includes aerial photos of each township. The books sell for $25 each, cash or check only.

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