

Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District



Winter 2017



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 18 Feb 15 Mar 15

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.



Watershed Update

Whitewater River Watershed Project

The Whitewater River Watershed received its second 319 grant from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, IDEM on November 10, 2016. The grant period is 39 months and will conclude in February 2020. The grant was awarded to start implementing the watershed management plan which was approved by the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, in August 2016. Copies of the management plan can be found online and will also be made available at all of the local SWCDs, libraries, and high schools early next year. The new implementation grant includes funds to continue its education and outreach efforts through field days, workshops, and newsletters. The grant also has funds to implement its own cost-share program. The cost-share program will assist landowners who are willing to install best management practices to improve water quality. All cost-share applicants will go through a ranking process and land located in high priority areas identified in the watershed management plan will be funded first. Both cropping and grazing practices will be available. The cost-share program will provide 70% of the cost to install or implement the best management

practices with set not to exceed rates. All funded applicants may receive up to \$8,000 in cost-share. Funding will be approved in rounds, so if you think you may be interested in applying for the cost-share program, please contact your local SWCD or Heather Wirth at heather.wirth@in.nacdn.net or 812-926-2406 Ext 107 as soon as possible.

SAVE THE DATE

Join the Franklin County SWCD for their **54th Annual Meeting and Dinner** on Tuesday, **January 31, 2017** at 6pm in the Franklin County High School cafeteria. A buffet meal will be prepared by Izzy's Catering. The keynote presenter will be **Mike Dunn**, Indiana Director of Freshwater Conservation at The Nature Conservancy. Mr. Dunn will be discussing how the TNC is partnering with NRCS, SWCD and the Indy Zoo to help encourage and assist landowners to restore soil health and install conservation practices to improve water quality in the Wabash River which ultimately affects the Gulf of Mexico. Tickets are \$9 per person. Please **RSVP** by **January 24th**. In the event of severe weather the snow date for the event is February 2nd at 6pm.

Grazing Bites by Victor Shelton, NRCS State Agronomist/Grazing Specialist

Winter is upon us, but we were blessed with really good fall conditions in most areas. Some areas could have benefited from a little bit more rain in October and early November, but for the most part, soil moisture levels were pretty good across Indiana. I am pleased with the fall forage growth and the amount of stockpiled forage. We have now seen cold enough temperatures to assume that we are now dealing with dormant forage.

If possible and practical, it is best to not start grazing stockpiled forage until it goes dormant. Until it goes dormant, every time that solar panel of leaves is removed, the plant will draw from the reserves in the roots. If you hurt those reserves too much, and you will set back spring growth. If you don't allow longer rest period in the spring to allow the plant to build back roots and reserves, you can really hurt your forage stand. There are times where grazing can be beneficial, such as for reducing competition early spring for frost seeded legumes.

If you are new to stockpiling, there are a few things to think about. It is usually best when first entering a field to give your livestock at least two or three days' worth of forage. You should start the grazing process on the end of the field with the water. You might be able to use a portable watering system for a while moving it along with the livestock, but that type of system gets challenging to keep from freezing. Back fencing is not nearly as important once the forages go dormant, so there is nothing really wrong with just utilizing water on one end of the field, as long as the walking distance and the time frame on the field doesn't create too much trailing.

The allocation that you gave the livestock can now be grazed down to the desired residual height, ideally still 3 to 4 inches for most fescues and orchardgrass. Once the plants are at that desired stop grazing height, it is time to allocate more. To get the highest efficiency, daily allocations are best, but you can increase the amount as needed. These allocations are easy to do with temporary fence, especially if you are not back fencing. If you are back fencing, you need three sets which would include a reel, poly-wire, and enough step-in posts to complete a run across the field. If you are not back fencing, then two sets are best, but you can make it with just one. With two sets, you can have one in place, and move the second with less concern of the livestock moving faster than you do. If back fencing, the third fence is the back fence. Once the livestock are moved into the new allocation, the old back fence can be moved ahead of time for the next allocation. This is especially nice if you are fighting daylight or timing of that next move.

Strip grazing of stockpiled forage can be done on any size of field, but longer, more narrow fields are certainly the easiest to work with. When you are laying out new permanent fence divisions, consider this if you plan to do any stockpiling. My wife thinks that any run over 300 feet is too much when she has to fill in for me...so we have gone with more longer, narrower fields, and I have to admit I find it kind of nice too.

A step-in post with a smaller, yet strong steel tip and a foot peg for easy installation works the best for the frozen soil conditions that are ahead. When grazing heavier stockpile, you will find that the ground does not freeze much unless we get extended sub-zero temperatures creating a nice insulation blanket. Keep your choice of reels reasonably cheap at least to start with if you are going to be doing short runs. Longer runs make it easier to justify more expensive ones because of the gearing.

Good quality stockpile is usually tall fescue. Nothing stockpiles as well and holds its nutritional value longer through the winter as tall fescue. If you have stockpiled orchardgrass, use it first. Orchardgrass starts falling apart fairly quickly and has little value as winter progresses. Quality stockpiled tall fescue quite often has better feed values than a lot of hay that is fed at the same time.

Unless you are still grazing fall-planted winter annuals with corn stalks, a lot of the value of corn stalks has been depleted by now and continuing to graze them will mean supplementation will probably be required. Sorghum-sudangrass has been frozen and dried off two or three weeks by now and could provide some grazing opportunities if still present. If you have ample stockpile of corn residues and annuals to continue grazing until the end of the year then you are already more efficient than most livestock producers; good job.

I've been asked numerous times lately about buying cows. Is now a good time to increase the cow herd? I can't really answer this question because I can't predict the future market, but I'm hoping this softened price trend will flatten off. If inputs are kept in check and the operation was not created or increased on the inflated market, then you are probably still in the game and profit is certainly possible. The higher cattle prices of the last five years were a nice blessing, but in reality, not sustainable long-term. We might complain about current prices, but honestly, they are still better than in the past. Only time will tell where prices go from here and how current events might influence them. Livestock producers just have to go back to one thing that they can control and that's inputs, especially with cow costs. You are usually better off, even when prices are high, to operate with an input level that works with lower prices. It would still pay to consider culling as needed and stick to the adage of "buy low and sell high."

Grazing Bites is a monthly article written by Victor Shelton. If you would like to receive these articles via email please email Victor at victor.shelton@in.usda.gov.

FSA Program Updates

2017 ARC-PLC Enrollment

Enrollment has begun for the 2017 crop year. Don't delay, call us today and schedule your appointment, 765-647-2651.

Farm Changes

It is important to keep your records up to date! We do not receive updates from anyone regarding owner/operator transfers or changes except from YOU! Keep in mind, we do not release any information regarding any farm without owner authorization, unless you are already on record for that farm. Keep us posted!

Conservation Reserve Program Participant's

A reminder to those CRP participants who have mid-contract management practices to complete on their CRP acreage this year—please be sure to stop by the office to confirm that you have the practice completed and submit your bills for cost-share. **2016 mid-contract management practices on CRP must be completed by December 31, 2016.**

Producers with CRP contracts that will be expiring in September of 2017 are encouraged to contact the county office to let us know if you are interested in re-enrolling or just letting it expire. Now is the time to start the process of re-enrollment.

Dates To Remember

Upcoming Acreage Reporting Deadlines

- January 2 –Honey
 - January 15 – Apples
- December 26 – Office Closed
January 2 – Office Closed

Office Hours

Monday – Friday
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
765-647-2651, Ext 2

For the birds!

By: Chris Fox

Last year, I wrote an article about why scientist use bird banding still today. This past fall, I got the opportunity to assist with a banding project at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary. The sanctuary is owned and operated by the Indiana Audubon Society and is located in Fayette County near Knolltown. Amy and Carl Wilms are resident managers and operate a Northern Saw-whet owl banding station as part of Project OwlNet. The project is a coordinated, cooperative banding project to determine the timing, intensity and pace of migration of the Northern Saw-whet owl, which was a little known species until the project began in the mid-1990's. Amy invited me to assist with her banding station this fall. An array of mist nets are set up in a wooded area and then a recording is played of a Saw-whet owl vocalization to attract the secretive owls into the net. Once an owl is caught in the net, the researchers quickly free the bird and apply a USGS bird band and take measures of the wings and bill along with accessing the condition and weight to help determine the age, sex and health of the owl. Interestingly, a black light is used to help determine the age of the feathers. The Northern Saw-whet owl, as the name implies, is an owl from the north and breeds in Canada, Alaska and in the mountains out West. However, it will migrate south in the winter into much of the US and about once every 4 years they irrupt, heading south in much higher numbers than usual. This is usually associated with the abundance and/or lack of food available. The diminutive owl is smaller than the Eastern Screech owl and weighs a mere 2-5 ounces. Saw-whets feed mainly on mice, shrews and voles and thus help in controlling the rodent population. Holding and then releasing one of these remarkable creatures was truly an unforgettable experience!

Dates to Remember

December 23: Christmas Eve
Observed holiday. **Office closed.**



December 26: Christmas Day
Observed holiday. **Office closed.**

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January 2: New Year's Day!
Observed holiday. **Office closed.**

January 23-24: IASWCD annual conference in Indianapolis.
Limited staff available.

January 16: Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday! **Office Closed.**

January 18: SWCD monthly meeting at 7:30pm.

January 31: 54th Annual meeting & dinner at 6:00pm in the FCHS cafeteria. *Please RSVP.*

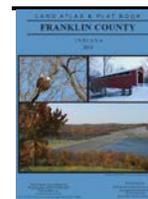
February 15: SWCD monthly meeting at 7:30pm.



February 20: Presidents Day!
Observed holiday. **Office closed.**

March 11: 11th Annual Conservation Tillage Breakfast & Workshop (PARP)—8:00am at Zimmer Tractor.

March 15: SWCD monthly meeting at 7:30pm.



**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.



Franklin County Soil &
Water Conservation District
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Brookville, IN 47012-9414



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