



# Conservation in the Neighborhood

VOL. 38, NO. 1

WINTER, 2017

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## Marion SWCD Annual Meeting

### Tuesday, February 28th, 5:00 p.m.

The Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District invites you to attend their 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting on Tuesday evening, February 28<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be held in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor conference room of [Discovery Hall in the northwest corner of the Indiana State Fairgrounds](#). Refreshments will be served and the meeting is free.

Our speaker will be the new Food Policy Coordinator for the City of Indianapolis, Shellye Suttles. Shellye was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. She attended the University of Southern California as an undergraduate student and completed a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies Biology. After graduation, she joined the Peace Corps as a sustainable agriculture and livestock volunteer in Santa María Visitación, Sololá, Guatemala working in conjunction with Children's Fund.

Shellye relates, "I very much enjoyed my agricultural volunteer service

with the Peace Corps and joined the master's program in Purdue's Department of Agricultural Economics to further my knowledge of agricultural



**Shellye Suttles, Food Policy Coordinator will be our annual meeting speaker**

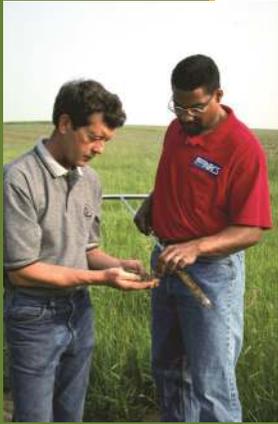
issues with an emphasis on economics. My master's thesis focused on gender differences in business goals and management strategies of family business managers in the United States and Canada. After completion of my master's degree, I continued in the department's doctorate program as a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Needs Fellow in the Economics of Alternative Energy. After completing

my doctoral dissertation, I joined the USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) as an agricultural economist in the Rural and Resource Economics Division. At ERS, my research focused on food and agricultural policy pertaining to local food systems, energy, and climate change. Upon returning to Indiana I felt it was important to become involved in food security beyond academic research and joined the City's Office of Public Health and Safety as Food Policy and Program Coordinator."

In addition to hearing about Shellye's work we will also have presentations highlighting the SWCD's work this year including updates on the Soil Health program.

Please [email Julie or Kevin](#) to let us know if you plan to attend.

## Spring into Our Soil Health Program



Soil health improvements create vigorous plant growth

*“Getting outside and making plans for spring will help fight cabin fever and give you a great start on your spring planting.”*

Set out a bird feeder to attract winter birds to your yard



Urban farmers & gardeners are learning how to improve their yields and increase plant vigor by incorporating soil health techniques into their plans. Success stories are flowing in from those who have benefited from them in the last

two years since the pilot project was started. See the story on page 3 as an example.

This year Kevin Allison, our Soil Health Specialist will be spreading the word even farther by creating a web-

site and blog on soil health. Watch your email for updates! If you have specific questions on soil health be sure to contact Kevin. More information is available on [our website](#) and from [NRCS](#).

## Winter Lawn & Garden Activities

Don't let the snow and cold weather keep you from your lawn and garden! Getting outside and making plans for spring will help fight cabin fever and give you a great start on your spring planting.

January is the time for perusing through all of the wonderful seed catalogues! Order early to be sure you can get the varieties you want most. If you're not already on their mailing list, contact a number of seed companies. Some of my favorites include Seed Savers Exchange, Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, R.H. Shumway's, and Territorial Seed Company. Gardens Alive is an Indiana company that specializes in natural lawn and garden products.

Take a cruise through your garden area and make a sketch to help you plan for this year. Rotate where you

plant (i.e. plant corn where the peas were last fall) to benefit from soil nutrients and minimize disease and insect problems. Plan what to grow, spacing, arrangement (study up on companion planting) and number of plants needed. If you have young trees, check them for signs of rodent injury on lower trunks. Protect them if needed with hardware cloth or protective collars. Protect plants from road and sidewalk salt.

Hopefully you had your soil tested this fall in order to plan for soil amendment needs this spring. If your pH is low you can add wood ash from the fireplace to your garden area. Soil testing will save you money as you won't be putting down unnecessary amounts of fertilizer and will also be better for water quality and the environment. If you haven't gotten your soil tested, it's still not too late by taking advantage of a January thaw.

Early spring flowering trees & shrubs can be forced into bloom indoors by putting cut branches in water in a warm location. Early spring crop seed such as broccoli, cauliflower & cabbage can be started indoors in February. Seeds should be started 5 to 7 weeks before transplanting.

If you have bare areas in your yard, frost seeding can give you an opportunity to use the freeze/thaw action of the soil to prepare grass seed for early germination as soon as the soil temperatures rise enough. Make plans to incorporate natural, ecologically friendly lawn methods by visiting our website's lawn & garden page. Spend some time at our website ([www.marionswcd.org](http://www.marionswcd.org)). We have a plethora of articles and helpful information for all of your land use needs.

**“It’s simple, when youth grow vegetables, they tend to eat them!”**

Kathy Tierney, Registered Dietitian  
Damar Services, Inc., Indianapolis

# Soil Health Hero

In the fall after a tough season, Kathy and the Marion County SWCD planted cover crops to regenerate the soil. In the spring, she cut and laid them on top of the garden beds. She added compost and fertilizer with guidance from a soil test, sowed and transplanted crops, then fortified the no-till mulch garden with clean alfalfa hay.



Cover crop use was so successful that Kathy continued its use with another planting in fall. Damar enjoyed a significant increase in vegetable production and dramatically fewer weeds, attributed to the use of the beneficial practices of planting cover crops, mulching and minimal soil disturbance.



*Cover crops are planted in Damar’s garden in fall. Some cover crops live throughout the winter, providing living, beneficial roots in the soil in spring.*



## Damar Services, Inc.

**Size:** 14 wood-framed raised beds

**Type:** School garden

**Practices:** Cover crops, mulch, no-till

**Benefits:** Enhanced soil health, moisture retention and weed control



*Once cut, cover crops can be applied as a mulch to help retain water, improve water quality and add nutrients back into the soil.*



## New Grants Fund Marion County Conservation



New grant funds target urban agriculture conservation & soil health work

Visit the Johnson/  
Marion County  
FSA office for  
information on  
applying for  
certification  
reimbursement

Organic  
growers  
may apply  
starting  
3/20/17



The District has been successful in securing two grant funding sources in 2016. In July 2016, the District was one of 42 projects awarded to various SWCDs across the country through the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Urban Agriculture Conservation Grants program. The NACD established the grant program to help conservation districts and their partners provide technical assistance for agriculture conservation, especially in underserved communi-

ties. Marion County SWCD was awarded \$50,000 through the program, which will be used to develop a website devoted to Soil Health, provide funding support for permaculture template designs for vacant lots, and a variety of outreach activities tied to improving the health of our soils. The work funded through the grant will be completed by August 2017.

Additionally, the District was one of 34 districts statewide to be awarded funding through

the 2017 Clean Water Indiana Competitive Grant program. Marion County was the lead applicant with our partners at the Hendricks County SWCD and the total grant award of \$80,000 will be utilized to fund a Program Outreach Specialist in Hendricks County for the Soil Health program in addition to a cost share program for the two counties. The grant implementation timeline is January 2017 through December 2019.

## Organic Certification Reimbursements

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announces that starting March 20, 2017, organic producers and handlers will be able to visit over 2,100 USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices to apply for federal reimbursement to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic or transitional certification.

USDA reimburses organic producers up to 75 percent of the cost of organic certification, but only about half of the nation's organic operations currently participate in the program. Starting March 20, USDA

will provide a uniform, streamlined process for organic producers and handlers to apply for organic cost share assistance either by mail or in person. Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic or transitional certification fees to a [USDA-accredited certifying agent](#). Application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement/ arrangement requirements, travel/ per diem for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage are all eligible for a cost share reimbursement from USDA.

Once certified, producers and handlers are eligible to receive reimbursement for

up to 75 percent of certification costs each year up to a maximum of \$750 per certification scope - crops, livestock, wild crops and handling. This announcement also adds transitional certification and state organic program fees as additional scopes.

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit

[www.fsa.usda.gov/organic](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/organic) or contact a local FSA office by visiting <http://offices.usda.gov>.

# New Clear Choices Clean Water Campaign



**Don't Feed Waterfowl—their poo is fowl too!**

Have you made a New Year's resolution to eat less and be healthier? Well, let's help our waterfowl do so too! *Clear Choices Clean Water* just launched its newest public action campaign to help prevent bacteria and algae in our waters – **Don't Feed Waterfowl, Their Poo is Fowl Too!**

You might not think feeding the ducks or geese and swans is a big deal, but it is! A single Canada Goose eats 3 - 4 pounds of grass and can create as much as 2 - 3 pounds of waste per day! Feeding waterfowl attracts a larger than normal population of waterfowl to an area. By attracting just 5 more geese to an area, potentially 10 - 15 more pounds of waste a day is added to that area. Excess waste can add excess nutrients and bacteria to our lakes and streams. Excess nutrients in the water can lead to summer algal blooms. The poo can also be harmful to humans. Waterfowl waste can present a fall hazard because of the slipper surface it can create. Goose poo has also been shown to contain a wide

variety of pathogens capable of infecting humans, including several parasites that can cause gastrointestinal problems. Geese and swans can be aggressive to humans if a nest is nearby. A population increase can also be detrimental to native plants and wildlife in and around lakes and streams. The mute swan eats 8 pounds of aquatic plants a day! The plants that the swans and geese eat rob other wildlife of important habitat.

So what can you do? It's simple! Visit

[Indiana.clearchoicescleanwater.org/waterfowl](http://Indiana.clearchoicescleanwater.org/waterfowl)

and Take a Pledge to enjoy waterfowl **simply by watching and not feeding**. Invite your friends, family, and neighbors to take the pledge too! Or share your action to your social media accounts. Take a pledge and get on the map!

While it is cold outside, wild animals are adapted to changing seasons and providing them low nutrition food like bread on irregular schedules does not help them abide by their natu-

ral instincts to migrate or find reliable, nutritious food sources. Once the waterfowl realize that you are no longer going to feed them, their instincts will kick in and they will survive just fine by foraging on their own for food.

We would like to give a special thanks to [The Watershed Foundation](#) for their continued support and on-going partnership of *Clear Choices Clean Water*. And also a special Thank You to a Kosciusko County REMC EnviroWatts grant for helping to fund the creation of the waterfowl management pledge.

**Support the Marion County SWCD by becoming an Affiliate Member.**  
**For information check our website: [www.marionswcd.org](http://www.marionswcd.org) or email [Julie-farr@iaswcd.org](mailto:Julie-farr@iaswcd.org)**

## Purdue Urban Farm Incubator Network

The Purdue Urban Farm Incubator Network is a supportive network for new urban farmers. The network assists beginning urban farmers to:

- \* Learn from and share your own knowledge with other beginning urban farmers
- \* Meet experienced small-scale and urban farmers
- \* Access professional development opportunities such as the Indiana Small Farm Conference
- \* Explore market opportunities for your locally grown products
- \* Applications now being taken – visit <https://www.purdue.edu/dffs/urbanag/programs/purdue-urban-farm-incubator/>



Apply for EQIP by  
January 20th.

*Johnson Grass is a  
tall, coarse,  
aggressive  
perennial that has  
become an  
invasive in Indiana*



## EQIP Deadline Quickly Approaches

Indiana's agriculture producers who want to improve natural resources and address concerns on their land are encouraged to sign up for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through the USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Jane Hardisty, NRCS State Conservationist, announced that **January 20, 2017 will be the EQIP application deadline in Indi-**

**ana.** "While we are taking applications throughout the year, the first review of applications for funding will be for applications received by January 20<sup>th</sup>.

If more funds are available after this date, there will be another review for additional applications. I encourage producers with resource concerns to submit an application by the application deadline." Hardisty explains.

For more information or assistance in applying for EQIP funds please contact the Marion County SWCD District Conservationist, Jerod Chew at 317-745-2555 or email him from our "[Contact Us](#)" page.

## Invasive Highlight: Johnson Grass

Johnson Grass was brought to the US from the Mediterranean area in the early 1800's as a forage grass for livestock. It has spread world wide. It is a tall, coarse, perennial very aggressive grass with stout (up to 3/4 inch in diameter) rhizomes. It grows in dense clumps to nearly solid stands. This species occurs in crop fields, pastures, abandoned

fields, rights-of-way and forest edges, and along stream banks. It thrives in open, disturbed, rich, bottom ground, particularly in cultivated fields. Heavy river-bottom infestations can reduce corn or soybean yields to only a few bushels per acre. The best control is to spray the plants when they are about 18 inches in height and in the early flowering stage with a 2%

solution of glyphosate herbicide. Individual plants can be pulled when they are small but it is essential to remove all the roots and parts of the plant.



## 2017 Affiliate Members Needed

Affiliate members are individuals, groups or organizations who choose to financially support the work of the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District. These funds are vitally needed especially during these lean financial times.

Gifts from affiliate members are used to continue services provided to county residents including consultation in land use, erosion control and drainage problems. Funds are also used for educational purposes, helping residents make in-

formed land use decisions.

To become an affiliate member visit our [website link here](#) or call the office at 317-786-1776.

# Apply Now for Conservation Stewardship Program

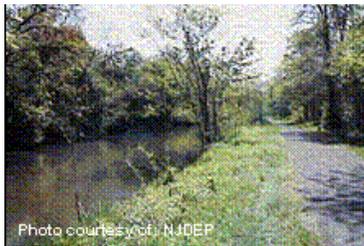


Photo courtesy of NIDEP

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Jane Hardisty announced that Indiana is now accepting applications for enrollment in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the nation's largest conservation program.

NRCS has made several revisions to the program this year to help producers better evaluate their conservation options and the benefits to their operations and natural resources. New methods and software for evaluating applications will help producers see up front why they are or are not meeting stewardship thresholds, and allow them to pick practices and enhance-

**CSP is NRCS' largest conservation program**

ments that work for their conservation objectives. These new tools also allow producers to see potential payment scenarios for conservation early in the process.

"The updated Conservation Stewardship Program provides even more opportunities for conservation and greater flexibility at the local level to prioritize resource concerns and conservation approaches," says Hardisty. "Customized CSP tools for Indiana will improve the customer experience during application evaluations."

The sign-up runs through February 3, 2017 and producers are encouraged to go ahead and apply. CSP is for producers who are already established conservation stewards and who want to add more conservation benefits on their land, such as

improved water and soil quality and enhanced wildlife habitat. Applications are available in local USDA service centers.

Through CSP, agricultural producers and forest landowners earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, ecologically-based pest management, buffer strips, and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat – all while maintaining active agriculture production on their land. CSP also encourages the adoption of new technologies and management techniques, such as precision agriculture applications, on-site carbon storage and planting for high carbon sequestration rate, and soil health practices to improve water quality.

For assistance contact Jerod Chew at 317-745-2555 or email him through our [web-site](#).

**Our sign-up for the Conservation Stewardship Program runs through February 3rd**

## FSA Calendar & Deadlines

**January 30:** Deadline to apply for 2016 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and 2016 Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)

**January 31:** Deadline to file Tree Assistance Program (TAP) application

**February 2:** Deadline to apply for Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) for unshorn pelts produced during the 2016 crop year

**February 20:** Offices closed in

observance of George Washington's Birthday

**March 15:** NAP application closing date for beans, beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cantaloupes, cucumbers, corn, eggplant, greens, herbs, honeydew, lettuce, oats, okra, onions, peas, peppers, potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, sorghum, soybeans, squash, tomatillos, tomatoes, watermelon

**March 20:** Organic producers and handlers can begin to apply for

organic cost share assistance

**March 31:** Final date to obtain loans or Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) on 2016 harvested small grains

Call the Marion/Johnson County FSA office at 317-736-6822 for more information.



MARION COUNTY  
**SOIL AND WATER**  
— CONSERVATION DISTRICT —

Discovery Hall, Suite 200  
1202 East 38th Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46205

Phone: 317-786-1776  
Find us on the web:  
[www.marionswcd.org](http://www.marionswcd.org)

The Mission of the Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District is to assist Marion County land users in conserving soil, water, and related natural resources by providing technical, financial and educational services.

**THANK YOU Supporting Affiliate Members!**

**Paul Wright Hayes and Ruth Rosser Hayes in honor of:**

- **George Harley**
- **Glenn Lange**
- **Marilyn Hughes**
- **Eli Bloom Memorial**

**George Haerle and Marion Haerle**  
**Stephanie Schuck**

## Don't Miss the Indiana Small Farm Conference!

### March 2- 4, Hendricks Co. Fairgrounds

Register for three days of sessions, networking, and interaction with vendors at the Indiana Small Farm Conference on March 2-4 in Danville.

Take an information deep-dive into one of our **full-day workshops** on March 2.

**\* Hop Production in Indiana: Issues that impact your farm viability**

Learn about growing hops from Indiana farmers and nationally known hop experts.

**\* Beginning Farmer Workshop: Getting started in farming in Indiana**

Gain knowledge and skills from nationally known speakers and get started on a successful path—whether you just started farming or are considering it for the future.

**\* Indianapolis Urban Agriculture Tour: Learn about agriculture production in Marion County**

Visit a school-based livestock project, commercial hydroponic farm, and commercial market farm.

**\* On-Farm Food Safety for Fruit and Vegetable Growers: Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Grower**

**Training**

Learn how federal regulations regarding produce safety recently changed through the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Rule, how it impacts your farm, and how to minimize the risk associated with food-borne pathogens on your farm.

Use **#PUSmallFarm** to spread the word on **Twitter** and **Facebook**.



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