



Conservation in the Neighborhood

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SWCD Invites you to their 46th Annual Meeting

You're Invited!

Please join Marion County SWCD for our annual meeting on February 23, 2016, from 5:00-8:00pm at Discovery Hall on the Indiana State Fairgrounds campus. This has been an exciting year at MCSWCD, and we look forward to sharing our work in soil and water conservation, including a presentation from Kevin Allison on our new Healthy Soils Program, the latest on the city's Stormwater Credits, and with updates from our partners: ISDA's Leah Harmon and NRCS's Jerod Chew. The evening will culminate with our Keynote Speaker, Phyllis Boyd of Groundwork Indy.

Before becoming the Executive Director of Groundwork Indy in August 2015, Phyllis Boyd was a landscape architect and urban designer focused on sustainable design and planning and dedicated

to working with diverse communities to transform their built environments into meaningful, relevant, and life-enhancing places. After eight years in the field, she



Phyllis Boyd of Groundwork Indy will be our main event speaker.

decided to transfer her skills and passion for working on community-oriented revitalization projects to the non-profit sector and joined Groundwork Indy.

Her experiences during her teen years working on Student Conservation Association trail crews in the Gila Wilderness of New Mexico and in Baxter State Park in Maine were transformative. Phyllis holds a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Indiana University in Bloomington and is a two-time alumna of The University of Texas at Austin where she received her Masters of Arts in Botany in 1997 and her Masters of Landscape Architecture in 2006.

We look forward to seeing you on February 23rd, for an evening of good food, great speakers, and a renewed commitment to clean water and healthy soils in Central Indiana!

RSVP to our office by calling 317-786-1776 before February 18th.

Glenn Lange Retires

Our best wishes go out to Glenn Lange, Resource Conservationist with the Marion County SWCD as he begins his retirement at the end of December. Glenn, who came to us in January of 2006 to head up our urban erosion control program, has been instrumental in providing assistance and monitoring to the many

construction projects which disturb more than one acre. Glenn has been very involved in providing training in erosion control measures to other city inspectors and contractors. He assisted homeowners with land use problems and has also provided leadership to the staff as we have been without a Director



for several years.

Thank you Glenn for all of your dedication and hard work! Enjoy your retirement – you have earned it!

What is a High Tunnel?

A high tunnel is a loosely defined term which can describe a hoop house or unheated greenhouse which is used to extend the growing season.

High tunnels can be 3 season structures whose plastic covering is taken down in the winter, or smaller high tunnels can be used during all 4

seasons.

High tunnels are relatively inexpensive yet provide many benefits to growers. They provide protection from wind, storms, and temperatures which may otherwise destroy a crop. They also extend the growing season in Indiana allowing growers to provide fresh produce to their customers for a much longer season.

To see how others are using high tunnels, visit USDA's blog at <http://blogs.usda.gov/tag/high>

-tunnels/

For information on cost share opportunities available through the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service contact Marion County District Conservationist Jerod Chew at 317-745-2555 or contact him on [our contact page](#).



Photo: Jody Christianson

“90% of the food that Hoosiers eat is imported.”

High Tunnels allow farmers to plant vegetable crops, herbs & flowers earlier in the season.



Extend the Growing Season with a Hoop House

Installing a Hoop House or Seasonal High Tunnel is an excellent way to extend the growing season for specialty crops such as vegetables, herbs, and berries by amplifying solar energy for warmth. Research has shown that Indianapolis suffers as a food desert and that 90% of the food that Hoosiers regularly eat is imported. This high percentage seems unthinkable in a state that is known for its high agricultural production

of corn and soybeans. Farmers wishing to take advantage of Indiana's wonderful soil as a means of providing nutritious fruits, vegetables and herbs as well as other plants to Hoosiers can expand their business with hoop

houses.

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service supports locally grown food by provid-

ing incentives for the installation of Seasonal High Tunnels. This is through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

[Check out this short video](#) about NRCS funded urban high tunnels and the link below for eligibility details (simple process). To apply contact [Jerod Chew – CS District Conservationist](#) or [Kevin Allison – Marion](#)



High Tunnels & vegetative blankets protect crops in the winter

[SWCD Urban Soil Health Specialist](#). 317-786-1776 - Application process can take some time, so start today!

For more information on high tunnels: https://prod.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs144p2_030914.pdf

Soil Health in Indianapolis



Cover crops build soil.

By Kevin Allison, Urban Soil Health Specialist

This fall, Butler University’s Department of Biological Sciences took soil samples from six local gardens, weighed them, and then put them in an oven to burn up the soil life and all of the organic material they’ve created as they made their home in the soil. Upon weighing the samples again, we are able to see how much was lost. The finished products were cups of heat resistant rocks and minerals of all different sizes, but the samples were no longer dark black and rich for growing food (see photo below). The pieces of sand, silt, and clay were shades of light brown and

lifeless, almost like a little pile of crushed bricks.

Organic matter may only account for five percent of what is beneath our feet, but the way it fluffs up the soil and nourishes life is ever-important. It builds good soil structure like mortar in a brick wall yet is sponge-like in its ability to retain water and nutrients. Plant life is almost impossible without OM! Without it you’d need to supplement more fertilizers because there’s nothing there to produce nitrogen.

Several local vegetable growers are taking advantage of 2015’s soil health mini-grant to help ensure that their soil is alive and healthy. In urban backyards, schools, and small farms, they are nurturing the living soil through the use of cover crops, the plants used in between crops to feed the beneficial soil life and build a more powerful and resilient soil. In fact, they join fellow Indiana farmers in planting almost a million acres

of cover crops throughout the state. This focus on soil health saves 32 million tons of soil at risk of erosion from the conventional farming technique of heavily tilling the soil and leaving it bare over winter.

In assisting grant recipients with soil tests and cover crop plantings, I got the opportunity to put my shovel into numerous gardens this growing season. Every garden was beautiful in its own right, but the healthiest gardens were using cover crops, diverse mulching strategies, and compost to increase the soil’s capacity to grow food. Looking ahead, it will be exciting to see life flourish in all these soils.

For more information contact Kevin at 317-786-1776.

“Organic matter may only account for five percent of what is beneath our feet, but the way it fluffs up the soil and nourishes life is ever-important.”



Healthy soil beneath white clover cover crop



New Heartland Backyard Conservation Grant



New Grant Program for 2016 will provide urban conservation

A new grant has recently been approved that will provide cost share dollars and technical assistance to landowners in Marion, Hamilton, Hancock and Madison counties.

Water quality in urban areas is subject to excess nutrients, metals, solid waste, sediment, increased temperature and petroleum products, just to name a few. This new program will reduce nutrient runoff by improving infiltration and soil health, reduce soil ero-

sion with improved vegetative cover, and filter storm water before entering water bodies. Native plants will be encouraged where they increase nutrient uptake, reduce nutrient applications, improve soil health and water infiltration.

Conservation practices which can receive cost share funds may include rain gardens, bioswales, water edge enhancements, filter strips, turf replacement, use of gypsum, tree and shrub planting, porous

pavement or pavers, soil testing and critical area stabilization.

Cost share will pay for 50% of the project up to \$2,000 per project. Technical assistance will be available from SWCD, NRCS, ISDA, Purdue Extension & Master Gardeners, IDNR Urban Wildlife Program, & Spence Nursery, among others.

For more information please contact [John South](#), Hamilton County SWCD or your local Soil & Water Conservation District.

“Water is the driving force of all nature.”

Leonardo da Vince

Website Offers Helpful Information

We invite you to browse through our website. We have created a place where you can find information on many aspects of natural resources that will be helpful in making good decisions. Under the [Soil tab](#) you will find information to help you find out about soil types in our county, how to control erosion and improve drainage, how to take a soil test and where to have it analyzed, and information on

Rule 5 requirements for construction sites.

Under the [Water tab](#) you will find information on watersheds and which watersheds currently have active cost share projects. You will also learn how to care for your septic system and how to improve water quality in our community.

Under the [Tree tab](#) you will find information to help you choose the best species for your location and needs, learn how to properly plant a tree and take care of it in the first

few years and basics for maintaining tree health. You will also find links to great websites and information on our next tree and shrub sale.

Under the [Going Green tab](#) you will find many ideas for greener and healthier living including native plants, ecologically healthy lawn & garden tips, water management, wildlife, recycling, conservation education and much more.

The [Agriculture tab](#)

(continued on page 5)

Find the help you need on our website



Join Us as an SWCD Affiliate Member!



Affiliate membership promotes conservation.

continue services provided to county residents including consultation in land use, erosion control and drainage

sion control can release literally tons of sediment into our waterways each year. Sedimentation clogs drainage ways, is a carrier for pollutants and is detrimental to fish and other aquatic life.

What is a SWCD Affiliate Member? 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. The SWCD's traditional funding from state and local government has not seen an increase in 14 years, while our cost of operations have continued to rise. Without additional funding our services will not be able to continue.

problems. For many of our lower income residents, it is not financially possible to hire private engineering and consulting firms to design and install drainage and erosion control practices on their property. In many instances our office can provide simple, do it yourself suggestions that will alleviate or minimize their problems. No other agency is able to do this for individuals and small neighborhood groups.

In addition, the SWCD is active in promoting wise land use and improvements in water quality through their educational programs, workshops and publications. Education is key to long term progress in soil and water quality and has always been a high priority for this District.

Support the Marion County SWCD by becoming an Affiliate Member.

What are the Affiliate Membership funds used for? Gifts from affiliate members are used to

Funding is needed to help continue erosion control inspections which are a critical part of improving and protecting water quality in the county. New construction, without proper ero-

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

For information check our website: www.marionswcd.org

(continued from page 4)
includes but is by no means limited to information for conventional farmers. Here you will also find help if you are a small farmer, an organic grower or someone interested in local foods and soil health. This part of our website is being added to on a regular basis as we are focusing on soil health in 2016.

and Additional Help tabs are all there to give you up to date and additional assistance. Of course you can also learn more about your SWCD and [donate](#) to the District from our [home page](#).

I hope you will spend some time at our website and see what it has to offer.

www.marionswcd.org

The calendar of events, News,

FSA NEWS

The latest updates on Farm Service Agency programs and sign up dates can be found on their website:

www.fsa.usda.gov

or call 317-736-6822

Check your soil type first!



Maps of Marion County's soil types are available online.

What do the following situations have in common: a failing septic system, potholes in the road, standing water in your crawlspace, a dying tree, and corroding pipes in the ground? They all can be caused by not considering the soil before making land use decisions. There are many different soil types in Marion County each with their own qualities and limitations. Which soil types are in your neighborhood? Finding out has never been easier!

You can find general soils information online by visiting the [Web Soil Survey](#). If you need help, our [fact sheet](#) will help guide you through the process. Once you have found your soil type our [non-technical soil descriptions](#) sheet will help you understand what land uses or plants are best suited for your soil type.

You can also get soils information on your iPhone! GPS based, real-time access to

USDA-NRCS soil survey data, formatted for the iPhone is [a free app available from iTunes](#). This application retrieves graphical summaries of soil types associated with the iPhone's current geographic location, based on a user defined horizontal precision. Sketches of soil profiles are linked to their official soil series description (OSD) page. Soil series names are linked to their associated page within the CA Soil Resource Lab's online soil survey, SoilWeb.

Up, up and away!

On July 7, 2015, Indiana Grown soared to new heights with its official launch at Waterman's Family Farm in Indianapolis. It is for all planters, producers, and processors of Indiana products. Numerous Indiana Grown

members attended in support of the launch and were available to share their excitement, answer questions, and promote their products. Non-members and media were able to learn more about Indiana Grown and view

Indiana Grown products on display at the launch. With the success of the launch, Indiana Grown now has close to 200 members and continues to receive member applications. For more information click this [link](#).

Indiana Grown
Featured on
IndyStyle
[Click Here](#) to
watch

Find Indiana Grown products at all Indiana Kroger and many Marsh stores



Kroger Partners with Indiana Grown

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture created the "Indiana Grown" program to help promote small Indiana farmers and their products.

This fall a large milestone was made when Kroger grocery stores agreed to sell locally grown products in all 102 of their Indiana stores. This will provide a large market for our small farmers and will provide

customers with easily accessible local produce. The stores will have bib tags, shelf strips, overhead signs and other displays to make finding locally grown foods easy.

Invasive Species Highlight - Autumn Olive



Autumn Olive's creamy white blooms

Autumn Olive is a deciduous shrub or small tree that is highly invasive in Indiana. From a distance it can be identified by its silvery appearance. The leaves are medium green on top and

distinctly silver on the underside. It was planted extensively for highway beautification and wildlife food in the 50's and early 60's and is spreading rapidly. It crowds out many native plants and since it fixes nitrogen it improves soil fertility to the point that many plant communities that prefer low fertility soils cannot survive. It is often called "Autumnberry" and prized by some for its food value. The fruit

is high in lycopene and other nutrients. It is being grown commercially in a few places for its food value, especially for making jams and jellies. It is considered an invasive plant in Indiana and should not be planted. Control is best achieved by cutting the plant and immediately treating the stump with a systemic herbicide such as glyphosate or triclopyr and a 20% concentration.

For more information visit our [website link](#).

Check our website for upcoming events & activities—

www.marionswcd.org

Walking in a Winter Wonderland

Walking in a Winter Wonderland -- is beautiful and great exercise but can be dangerous when ice builds up on sidewalks and streets. Traditionally, many people have used various types of salts to melt ice from walkways. They've worked fairly well, especially if it's not bitterly cold outside but they do have some negative environmental side effects. Many plants and trees are sensitive to salt and when salt runs off sidewalks and streets it enters our streams, creating water quality problems.

Many Indiana towns are using beet juice to help de-ice streets. A beet farmer in Illinois patented beet juice for this use in 2005 after finding that brown beet juice doesn't freeze -- even when temperatures plummet below 0 degrees F! Other ways to combat ice include:

- **Shovel -- early and often!**

- **Keeping snow off of sidewalks and driveways helps keep ice from building up.** Check with your doctor before deciding whether to shovel snow yourself this winter or hire it done.
- **Snow melt mats** -- if you're building a new home, especially one with a steep driveway, consider installing electric heaters in your driveway. Yes, you'll use extra electricity, but it will make your driveway much safer.
- **Use sand or even birdseed** to give you some traction on sidewalks.
- **Wear boots or buy boot ice grippers/cleats** to put on your shoes to give you much better traction for walking

If you must use salt, calcium chloride is thought to be a better choice than sodium chloride or

potassium chloride. Urea is also not very environmentally friendly since you need to use ten times the amount you would need to fertilize the same area of lawn. Be sure to only use the recommended amounts and keep it away from salt sensitive plants and trees.



A winter walk is a great way to get out and enjoy nature - just prepare the way ahead of time



MARION COUNTY
SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Discovery Hall, Suite 200
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Indianapolis, IN 46205

Phone: 317-786-1776
Find us on the web:
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!

Copper Members

Robert Eddleman Mark Kautz
Beth Mason Stephanie Schuck

Ruth & Paul Hayes, in honor of Eli Bloom & George Haerle

Nickel Members

Rick Bein George Haerle, in honor of Marilyn & Eli Bloom

Silver Member

Marion County Farm Bureau

10 Great Conservation Projects

Don't let the cold weather keep you down! Winter is a great time to plan and tackle new projects that will help the environment and improve your own health. Here are 10 conservation project ideas to get you started:

- 1) **Litter Clean-up.** Walk your neighborhood or park and pick up litter. Bring along gloves and a trash bag.
- 2) **Recycle.** Clean out your home, garage, and basement to reduce, re-use and [recycle](#).
- 3) **Prepare for the next Tox Away day.** While you're cleaning out, box up old paint and other toxic substances so you're all ready to take it in to be disposed of properly. Visit the [city's website](#) for days and locations where you can drop them off.
- 4) **Plan a garden.** Grab a few library books and plan a vegetable garden. Draw up your plan to include conservation techniques including cover crops, companion plantings and a composting area.



Visit our website to learn about our [Soil Health program](#).

- 5) **Shop seed catalogues and start seedlings indoors.** There are many great companies that provide seed and information on how to start your garden. Most of the companies bring out their new catalogues in December & January.
- 6) **Take a winter hike** – visit a nearby county or state park. Call ahead and you may find an organized nature hike or bird watch group you can join.
- 7) **Make a birdhouse.** There are many free plans online including those from the magazine [Birds & Blooms](#) and the [North American Bluebird Society](#).
- 8) **Participate in Cornell University's bird count.** Set up a feeder, provide water and enjoy the show!
- 9) **Create wildlife habitat.** Find ideas on the [National Wildlife Federation's](#) website.
- 10) **Attend a film event sponsored by the Eastside Creation Care Network.** The lineup for the next few months is now being planned. Visit our [Events Tab](#) to find out where and when the next film will be shown.

SWCD Staff

- Marilyn Hughes, Administrative Assistant
Glenn Lange, Resource Conservationist
Julie Farr, Resource Conservationist PT
Leslie White, Backyard Conservation Coordinator
Kevin Allison, Urban Soil Health Specialist
Jerod Chew, NRCS District Conservationist