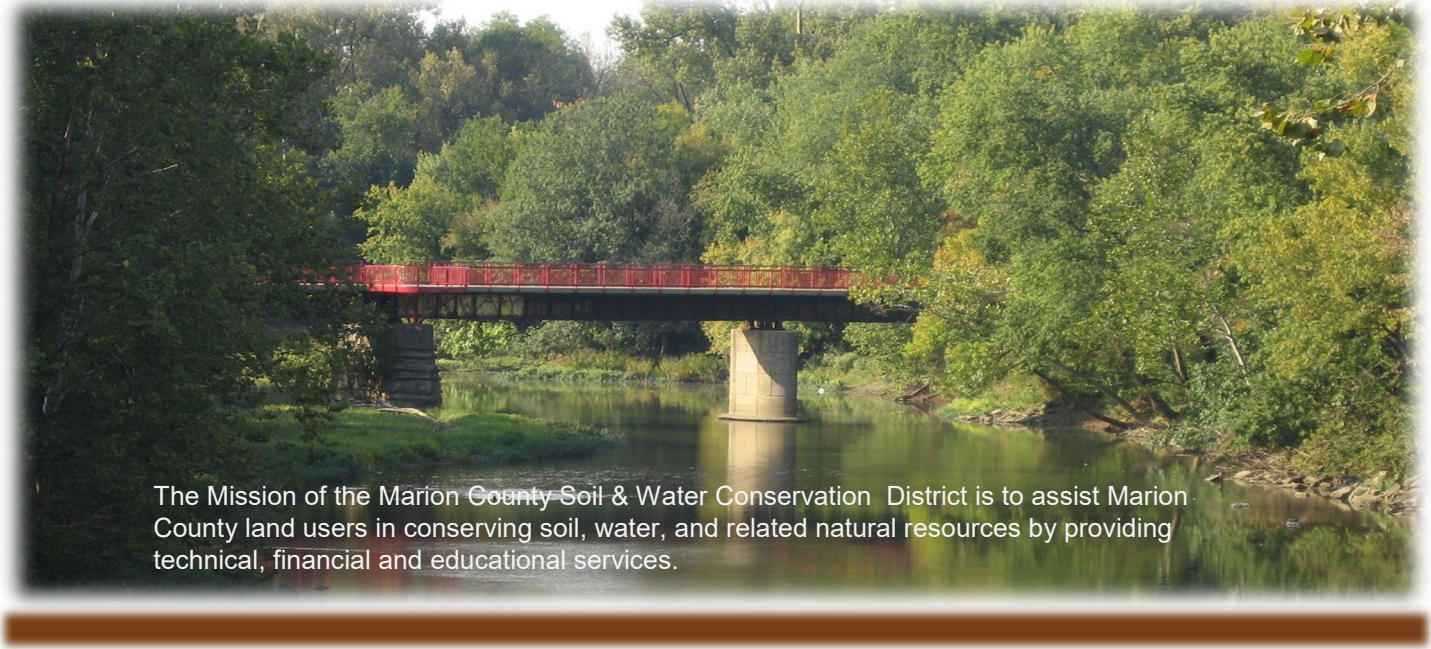


Marion County SWCD

2020 Annual Report



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.

Chairman's Report

By Blake Wilson

Well, 2020 was a year we will never forget. The pandemic caused changes that were reflected in every aspect of our day to day lives. Despite the limitations of social distancing, reduced capacities and needing to work from home, the Marion County SWCD staff continued to operate. Yes, there were set backs - our office building was closed most of the year due to the Pandemic, our cover crop seed give away was cancelled, mystery seeds from China arrived in the mail (never plant these) and we said good-bye to Cheyenne Hoffa our Urban Conservationist who went to work in the private sector. Cheyenne you will be missed, and we wish you the best in your new endeavors.

I did want to thank all our staff who worked for the Marion County SWCD throughout the 2020 year. Our staff consisting of Kevin Allison (Urban Soil Health Specialist), Julie Farr (Resource Conservationist, PT), Cheyenne Hoffa (former Urban Conservationist), Elli Blaine (contracted Soil Health, PT) and our newest member Alena Jones (Urban Conservationist) continued to provide services to our local community even while our physical office was closed due to COVID-19. I especially wish to thank John Hazlett our District Manager who not only managed through the Pandemic from remote locations, one being his car, but he and his team were able to accomplish some very wonderful things in 2020.

The SWCD, with the support and help of John, Kevin, Julie, Elli, and Alena were able to:

- Update the Lower Fall Creek Watershed Management Plan. Updating this plan will ultimately allow the MCSWCD to apply for funding from IDEM's 319 grant program. These funds are used to improve our waterways.
- Receive a \$50,000 grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. MCSWCD was one of 21 conservation districts in the country to receive this funding. Quite an accomplishment. This grant supported our urban agricultural community and was used to provide educational workshops and training in native perennial habitats and developing biodiversity ecosystems and habitats.
- Maintain and update our website, www.marionswcd.org to provide useful information on natural means of lawn care, waterway protection, stormwater management, urban farming, soil health and how to combat invasive species that continue to plague our communities.
- Receive a \$27,500 grant from the 2021 Indiana Clean Water Grant program. This grant will support our clean water programs and provide education and workshops to urban farmers concerning rain barrels, rain gardens and storm-water management.

(Continued on page 2)

District Manager's Year in Review

By John Hazlett, District Manager

2020 was a year like no other as district staff adapted to our remote offices, board meetings were held virtually, and "I think you're muted" became a regular part of work life on Zoom/Teams/WebEx. Despite these challenges, the majority of our staff's work was in the field and not surprisingly they knocked it out of the park—pushing our programs and adapting to their workloads with COVID precautions in mind. Our new Urban Conservationist Alena Jones hit the ground running in September and completed 101 inspections in December alone—she's a great addition to our team! I was also amazed by the coordinated efforts of our Indiana Conversation Partnership organizations like the Indiana State Department of Agriculture and USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service during this unique time as well as City of Indianapolis DPW staff with whom we maintained almost daily communication with program staff through email and virtual meetings.

Leveraging our primary budget funding from the City, we were able to secure a variety of philanthropic, state and national funding sources for various projects and resource development efforts. New grants included a subgrant through [Friends of White River](#) funded by the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust (NMPCT) Partners for the White River-Phase 2 to develop a Stream Steward Guide for riparian property owners; an NACD Urban Agriculture Initiative grant and NRCS Cooperative Agreement for our soil health program; and a 2021 Clean Water Indiana grant for future rain barrel and rain garden workshops.

Key highlights from 2020 include the following:

- Funded through a flex fund grant from [Reconnecting to Our Waterways \(ROW\)](#) with support from various local partners including NMPCT, Citizens Energy Group and a local developer and museum, we worked with the ROW Fall

Creek Steering Committee and Christopher Burke Engineering to update the 2009 Lower Fall Creek Watershed Plan. The updated plan included development of an interactive website (<https://cbbel-in.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=fbafad4ffe334096ae88e10e53aa8387>), a digital survey and a series of virtual public meetings to identify water quality concerns and action strategies. The updated plan has been submitted to IDEM with hopes of ultimately gaining US EPA approval and making the plan eligible for 319 grant implementation funds.



- Development of a website with resources by our local CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Management Area) partner organization Circle City CISMA: www.circlecitycisma.org Many thanks to affiliate donor Carol Hooker for her work on this site and financial contribution to fund the webhosting.
- Various restoration projects at Barton Park along Fall Creek with our partners at the City's Office of Land Stewardship, ROW and plant material grown by Indy Urban Acres.
- A local tour of key soil health demonstration sites with State Representative Earl Harris, Jr. from Indiana House District 2, in cooperation with Purdue Extension and local district staff.

A HUGE thank you to our staff and board of supervisors for all your efforts in 2020 - a year to forget or a year to remember, depending on your perspective!

(Chair's Report— Continued from page 1)

- Through the Soil Health Program, Kevin has helped numerous urban farmers and gardeners who are producing food whether it be for sale, personal consumption, or donations in support of local community efforts
- The MCSWCD workshops and webinars produced by Kevin Allison have helped educate local urban farmers on crop rotation, cover cropping, nutrient management and the benefits of insects and pollinators.

As you can see even under the restrictions of 2020 the

MCSWCD staff continued to work with our local farmers, residents, and commercial developers by providing the continued services we are known for. Yes, our physical office was closed much of the year, but we were and are still here supporting local farmers and residents. My thanks go out to our staff. Without our dedicated staff we would not be able to provide the education, training, and expertise you have come to rely on.

Please do not hesitate to contact our staff who will be happy to answer your questions and provide education as it relates to clean water and healthy soil. We would love to hear from you!

Soil Health & Urban Agriculture

By Kevin Allison, Soil Health Specialist

The Marion County SWCD provides educational opportunities and technical assistance in the realm of soil health and urban agriculture. In 2020, the SWCD provided direct technical assistance to 27 farming and gardening operations and completed 23 site visits, assisting growers with conservation practices that include nutrient management, crop rotation, cover crops, mulching, native plantings, and support for perennial agriculture through tree and shrub plantings. We conducted 17 workshops, presentations, and trainings and reached over 700 attendees with topics ranging from soil health to beneficial insect management and through a diversity of venues including local farms, the SWCD Eagle Creek Demo Garden, Indiana Small Farms Conference, Hort Congress, and virtual platforms.

The SWCD is engaged in three important grants that support these educational and on-farm efforts. Special thanks to the National Association of Conservation Districts, Indiana State Department of Agriculture Clean Water Indiana, and the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS).

The SWCD implemented a [National Association of Conservation Districts 2020 Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant](#) to increase the adoption of native plants. We partnered with the Parks Alliance's local non-profit farm Indy Urban Acres (IUA) to serve as a demonstration site for insectary strips, field borders, and hedgerows to enhance habitat for beneficial and pollinating insects. We assisted IUA in the development of a native plant nursery to ensure a sustainable source of plant stock for current and future projects including those completed at Groundwork Indy and Barton Park. We conducted trainings and created [technical documents](#) to support and educate farmers, gardeners, and conservation agency partners and to increase SWCD technical capacity in the application of native plants in urban agriculture. Although we could not safely utilize the anticipated large volunteer base to complete the planting of over 3,500 plants, the SWCD and IUA staff, along with small groups of gracious volunteers, rose to the occasion and got roots in the ground. The project received recognition in the 2020 USDA-NRCS Indiana Annual Report found [here](#).

Clean Water Indiana has been a perennial staple of support for the SWCD's soil health efforts. The current grant (2019-2021) is focused on educational workshops and on-farm soil health trials. The SWCD is working closely with farms to execute planned 3-year vegetable crop rotations that incorporate cover crops and no tillage. The goal is to analyze the pros and cons of techniques and to explore germination success, crop productivity, weed suppression, pest pressure, and changes in labor inputs. As this project progresses in 2021, the information gained will become



a valuable asset in the creation of technical documents and education surrounding soil health in vegetable farming and gardening.

In 2020, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service accepted Marion County SWCD's proposal to continue its partnership in soil health and urban agriculture. The SWCD has entered into a 5 year funding agreement with the USDA-NRCS to enable the SWCD to continue to staff the soil health technical position, provide grower workshops and agency trainings, conduct direct technical assistance, and review Indiana's USDA technical documents to ensure they are inclusive of agriculture in the urban environment. The SWCD is especially excited about the deliverable to create a Soil Health Guide for Gardeners, a grower friendly technical how-to document on the implementation of regenerative practices in the vegetable garden.

In addition to the Marion County SWCD agreement, the USDA-NRCS also launched a partnership with the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts to increase soil health education and urban conservation statewide through support for local districts and working groups. Elli Blaine was named the program director of the new statewide initiative. Previously, Elli had worked as an assistant manager at Indy Urban Acres and as soil health outreach coordinator for Marion and Hendricks County SWCDs. Her efforts with the Marion County SWCD were invaluable, and we look forward to partnering with her in her new role. Thanks for all your service and congratulations Elli!

Looking ahead in 2021, the SWCD will continue in its efforts to serve urban agriculture and the gardening community through workshops, technical assistance, and resources. We will build on our partnerships with statewide conservation agencies and provide continued support to local efforts such as the Purdue Extension Marion County Urban Ag Advisory Committee. Last, but not least, the Marion County SWCD Eagle Creek Demonstration Garden will be entering into its 4th no-till season. While currently growing cover crops, March is on the way and vegetable season is upon us. This coming year, a portion of the garden's produce will be donated to food pantries.

Soil Health = Plant Health = Human Health

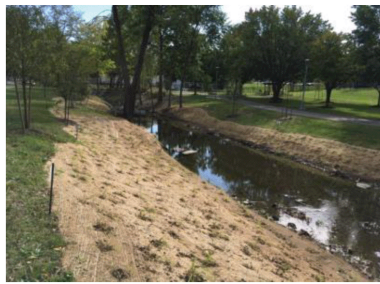


Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District 2020 Annual Activities Report

January 1 through December 31, 2020

The Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a unit of state government, supported primarily by the City-County Council with some funds from state government. The SWCD was established to provide technical assistance to Marion County residents and land users concerning the proper management of soil, water and other related natural resources. We work closely with local government, community organizations and residents on such items as water quality and drainage issues, soil erosion and sedimentation control, urban soil health, green space and wildlife habitat, conservation planning and education to help create a better quality living environment for everyone in the county.

This 2020 annual report was developed to keep city, county, and federal level legislators, government agency directors, and various community leaders informed of our on-going activities. This is just a snapshot of our activities, anyone with any questions or comments are encouraged to contact our Marion Co. SWCD office at 1200 Madison Ave. Suite 200, Indianapolis, IN 46225 for more details. Our phone number is 317-786-1776, and our web site is www.marionswcd.org



Assisting Residents with Flooding, Stream Care & Land Use Issues



Construction Site Reviews and Inspections Help Prevent Pollution

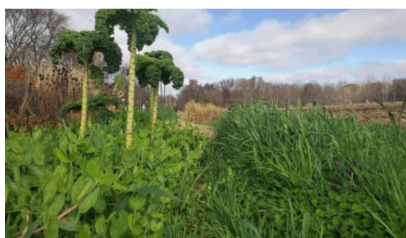


Urban Soil Health Program Cover Crops Help Rebuild Soils

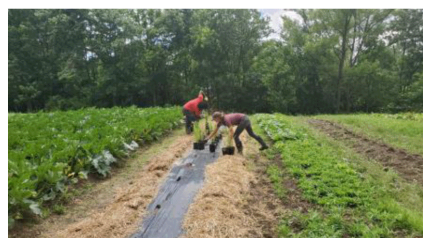
I. 2020 Major Natural Resource Projects Summary

Marion Co. SWCD conservation projects and public outreach efforts were completed to help the district communicate, coordinate, assist, and cooperate with others on conservation needs and solutions for landowners and land users in the county. The efforts can take a minimum of 2-4 hours to several days or weeks or are ongoing depending on the type of project.

Project Summary	Numbers	Date	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Soil Health Program 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Soil Health Program – Presentations/Workshops 	17/700 Attendees	during year	Outreach/Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Soil Health Program – Consultations/Site Visits 	27/23	during year	Outreach/Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Soil Health Program – Grants to Landowners 	7	during year	Grants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Indianapolis-DPW & DCE - MOU & NPDES Report 	3 items	12/01	MOU, budget, and report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Indianapolis-DPW Water Quality Meetings 	9 meetings	during year	Water Quality Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other Projects & Coordination with Conservation Organizations 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indiana Association of Conservation Districts (IASWCD) Conference 	3 days	1/11-13	Board & Staff Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marion Co. SWCD Annual Meeting w- Annual Report 	40+ attendees	2/19	Reported accomplishments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distributed newsletter on activities & watershed programs 	4 / yr	during year	1458 on mailing list
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marion County SWCD Website 	7,980 users	during year	Public Outreach



Cover crops & kale in SWCD demonstration garden



Insectary strip at Indy Urban Acres



Representative Earl Harris, Jr. joins SWCD on an urban garden tour

I. Natural Resource Technical Requests, Contacts, & Visits with Land Users

Through on-site visits, telephone calls and written recommendations, the district assists landowners, land users, and construction site managers with drainage, water management, erosion control, vegetative management options, and other related natural resource topics. These assistance efforts take an estimated amount of hours shown below depending on the type of assistance provided to schedule, inventory available site data, visit the site, plan recommendations, and respond to the request with written comments to the land user, landowner, or contractor.

Township	# Technical Assists Provided (@ 0.5 hr)	# Site Visits Made (@ 1.5 hrs)	# Reports Provided (@ 1 hr)	# Surveys Provided (@ 2 hrs)	Preliminary Plat Reviews (@ 0.75 hrs)
Center	2	1	0	0	14
Decatur	4	12	8	3	2
Franklin	3	47	8	6	18
Lawrence	2	38	25	4	5
Perry	2	37	31	5	2
Pike	4	16	9	2	2
Warren	4	23	17	4	7
Washington	6	38	26	9	4
Wayne	3	10	4	1	4
TOTAL	30	222	128	34	58

Construction Site, Erosion Control and SWPPP Stormwater Reviews, Contacts & Reports

Township	# SWPPP * Reviews Provided (@ 3 hrs)	# Erosion Plan** Inspections Reports (@ 0.75hrs)	# of Site Inspections Made (@ 0.75hrs)	On-site TA Meetings
Center	12	33	93	2
Decatur	0	12	30	0
Franklin	2	23	46	1
Lawrence	3	18	33	3
Perry	1	10	28	0
Pike	4	4	23	0
Warren	0	14	26	1
Washington	3	17	45	0
Wayne	1	15	44	0
TOTAL	26	146	368	7

Notes: *SWPPP= Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans
 **Written Reports Detailing Non-Compliance Issues

III. State/Federal Cost Share/Grant Projects- SWCD brought into county additional: \$179,027.35

The Marion Co. SWCD is always looking for ways to assist landowners via a variety of county, state, and federal cost share and grant funds to assist with the installation of conservation practices in the county. Local funds are often limited or non-existent for the SWCD to provide monetary assistance for land improvement or land protection conservation measures. The projects can take a minimum of 2-4 days to several months depending on the type of activity. The following program funds are being provided through our joint, cooperative efforts with the USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assigned to assist the Marion County SWCD and the Clean Water Indiana Grant Program, administered by the State Department of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation and the State Soil Board.

Program	Funds Provided	Type of Projects
NRCS Conservation Programs	\$24,990.00	Acres of Planned and/or Applied Land Conservation Practices
Clean Water Indiana Grant (CWI)	\$10,000.00	General District Operational Funds
Urban Soil Health – NACD 2020 UAC Grant	\$47,522.76	Urban Soil Health Program - Technical Assistance, Demonstration, Adult Education
Urban Soil Health - Clean Water IN Grant	\$29,196.59	Urban Soil Health Program - Technical Assistance, Demonstration, Adult Education
ISDA – DOSC Regional Support	\$4,932.00	Technical & SWCD Support Staff
NRCS Staff Support	\$62,386.00	District Conservationist

EACH CITY/COUNTY TAX DOLLAR INVESTED IN THE SWCD LEVERAGES \$2.11 IN OTHER FUNDING

Urban Conservation Program

By Alena Jones, Urban Conservationist

The urban conservation program at the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District focuses on erosion control and preventing sediment pollution in Marion County. This goal is accomplished by inspecting sites and providing technical assistance to public and private projects with a land disturbance of more than one acre to ensure appropriate conservation measures are in place. Having joined the District in September 2020, I've been working to understand all the moving pieces of the work we do to conserve land and water in Marion County - and I'm excited to continue that work in the new year.

As we enter 2021, we will see the City of Indianapolis shift to a new, administratively-issued Construction General Permit that will replace the permit-by-rule, Rule 5, which has governed expectations for construction activities within our MS4. Since all permittees with active projects will be required to file a new Notice Of Intent for their project under the new permit, we have been working with permittees to make sure that all finished projects have filed a Notice of Termination. No reason to make folks do extra paperwork!

Looking back on 2020, we are pleased to share that we were able to conduct hundreds of inspections on public and private projects, and have seen the project compliance rate trending slowly but steadily upward over the past six months. District staff are always happy to meet with contractors and provide advice or technical assistance to aid in getting sites in compliance with best management practices. In 2020 and looking ahead to 2021, we're investing in outreach to help connect with neighborhoods, contractors, project managers, land developers, and construction superintendents to ensure that we can provide technical assistance and advice and prevent erosion and sediment pollution in Marion County.

As we move into 2021 we plan to increase the number of technical assistance visits to active projects in Marion County and work with contractors to improve compliance-after-correction rates for projects in the city. It is very difficult for a site to be compliant 100% of the time and common for inspectors to find issues when they visit a site. Corrections are required within a ten-day period.

Although we are regularly inspecting all active sites in Marion County, community members are key partners in letting us know if they are observing issues at a site. Community-identified issues are commonly things like sediment tracking on roadways or debris onsite. If you notice an issue, please feel free to reach out to the City and/or to the District. You can reach out to the District through the comment form on the [District website](#), the City through the [Mayor's Action Center](#), and/or the [Indiana Department of Environmental Management's online complaint form](#).



Thank You 2020 Donors!

Jordan Capps

Jerome Delbridge

Joan Griffitts

Carol Hooker

Judith Houser

Julie Rhodes

Your help has promoted vital conservation work in Marion County!

A Busy Year for Conservation Assistance

By Julie Haxton Farr, Resource Conservationist

If you were like many of us, in 2020 you spent more time at home than ever! Being at home allowed many residents to find or remember a lot of projects that need to be done around the house and yard. For the SWCD that meant even more calls for assistance than usual and for many who have been working from home, it provided opportunities for us to help neighbors get together to solve drainage and erosion problems.

Our office provides several services to the county in regards to natural resources. Some of these services include assisting landowners from farms to neighborhoods with land use decisions, solving drainage and erosion problems, and educating on soil and water related issues. While we spend a lot of time individually with landowners onsite evaluating specific needs, there are a number of resources on [our website](#) that can also help solve problems. For instance, under "Drainage" you can find fact sheets on soil types in our county & how to use the soil survey, how to solve problems with surface drainage, subsurface drainage, farm drain tiles and hillside seeps.

Under "Urban Conservation" you will find a large variety of helpful resources including those on raingardens, rain barrels, bioswales, native plants and invasive species, septic system maintenance, ecologically friendly lawn care, trees, wildlife and our contractors list. Be sure to check our "Soil Health" pages



which are there for our wildly popular Soil Health program participants. Builders and developers will find our "Construction" page very helpful as they work to remain in compliance with local erosion control ordinances. This year we will be adding some new resources as well and updating fact sheets and links throughout the site. Be sure to utilize this great resource!

For those needing assistance please use the "Contact" tab to send us an email and someone will get back with you as soon as possible. Our physical office is still closed due to the Corona virus but our staff continues to work and be available to help you.

Congratulations Elli!

Our warmest congratulations go out to Elli Blaine, previously our Soil Health Outreach Coordinator, who is our new Indiana State Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) Program Director of Urban Soil Health. This is a new initiative, started in January, which is a program being launched between IASWCD and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to promote a systematic conservation approach to agriculture in urban settings and with farmers otherwise new to agriculture.

Elli was instrumental in helping the Marion County SWCD launch and grow its Urban Soil Health program and has hands-on experience as an Assistant Manager with the non-profit farm Indy Urban Acres. Blaine will expand the existing urban soil health movement in the state, "with the goal of reaching more urban growers, small farms, market farms, specialty crop and

diverse growers, etc. The term "urban" is used loosely - we want to reach growers that are farming on a relatively small footprint, but we are not limited to growers in dense urban centers."



To reach Elli and find out more about this new program email her at eliana-blaine@iaswcd.org.

Meet Our SWCD Board

Blake Wilson, Chair is a Licensed Professional Geologist (LPG) with over 25 years of experience in the environmental field. His environmental background includes asbestos inspection and management planning, lead, underground storage tank management, hazardous waste site characterization, wetland delineation and mitigation design, NEPA investigations, storm water management, erosion control and environmental site assessment and testing.

Scott Minor, Vice Chair Scott is a landscape architect and environmental planner for the White River Alliance, a multi-stakeholder nonprofit working to improve and protect the waters of the Upper White River Watershed. Scott is a LEED-accredited and SEED Public Interest Design Professional with certifications in wetland delineation and environmental habitat stewardship and a strong interest in permaculture systems. His work today includes outreach planning for the Office of Land Stewardship, development of educational tools and workshops for the Alliance and Clear Choices Clean Water, and helping advance efforts to develop a statewide, regional planning framework to protect Indiana’s water assets.

Heather Buck, Secretary is a Resource Planner at Christopher B. Burke Engineering, working in local natural hazard mitigation, stormwater management planning, & water quality monitoring. She serves as the President of the Indiana Lakes Management Society Board and as an Area Representative for EnviroCert International’s Certified MS4 Specialist program.

Brian Neilson, Treasurer P.E., LEED AP, has over 30 years experience working with the public & private engineering sector. He is involved with alternative water & wastewater management, Low Impact Development, green infrastructure, watershed planning, stormwater master planning, combined sewer overflow abatement, water quality assessments of lakes, rivers & streams, and land use & greenway planning, among others.

Maggie Goeglein is the Development Director of the Edna Martin Christian Center, a 76-year-old community center serving Indy’s Martindale-Brightwood neighborhood. Maggie provides direct service in the youth program and assists with fund development and site development for EMCC’s new 12-acre facility. In addition to working with youth, Maggie has managed multiple large corporate service events focused on renovating the new facility and building a youth and seniors garden on the property, and worked with other staff on several successful grant applications totaling nearly \$1 million in funding.

Associate Supervisors

Paula Baldwin	Rick Bein	Marvin Brethauer
Bob Eddleman	Mark Kautz	Robert Kleinops
Beth Mason	Mark Mongin	Dennis Slaughter
Olivia Speckman	Henry Wallis	



SWCD Staff

John Hazlett, District Manager

Kevin Allison, Urban Soil Health Specialist

Alena Jones, Urban Conservationist

Julie Farr, Resource Conservationist, PT

Jerod Chew, NRCS District Conservationist

Visit our website at

www.marionswcd.org

And checkout our Facebook page



Natives Planting at Barton Park