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Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District

2022 Annual Report

The Mission of our 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.

From the Chair

By Olivia Speckman

We are looking forward to the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District's Annual Meeting. It will be great to be together in person after two years of virtual meetings. We are looking forward to catching up and telling you all about the great work the district is doing.

This past year brought some changes as we began implementing the new IDEM Construction Stormwater General Permit (CSGP) that replaced Rule 5 in December, 2021.

2022 was a great year for our partnerships. In June, we held a multi day Rainscaping workshop with Purdue Extension. We also held a rain barrel workshop with ROW and several Stream Steward workshops with Friends of White River throughout the year. We plan to continue hosting workshops this year including one at Sargent Road Nature Park in the Spring, and we have secured a new Clean Water Indiana grant to hold additional workshops at Indy Urban Acres.

On behalf of the board, I'd like to thank our amazing staff, Alena, Julie, Kevin, and John for all of the great work they do every day. We'd also like to thank all of our partners and friends for your continued support as we look forward to another great year!



KevinTungsevic

District Manager's Year in Review

By John Hazlett

Throughout 2022 it was my pleasure working on various district initiatives while watching our rockstar staff “do what they do”-serving as local experts on drainage, construction site sediment and erosion control and soil health. I feel very lucky to work with and learn from my awesome staff everyday, whether through in person site visits, virtual meetings or a phone call to touch base during the workday. While we do still occasionally spend time in the office, most of our staff time is devoted to fieldwork serving the residents of Marion County and the City of Indianapolis, specifically the Department of Public Works and Department of Business and Neighborhood Services. Without a doubt the work is interesting and no two days are the same! I’m really proud of the work we accomplished in 2022 and looking back here are a few highlights I’ll remember from the year:

- ◆ Working with the energetic and hyper organized folks at Millersville at Fall Creek Valley, Inc. on a Weed Wrangle© for a small section of Fall Creek riparian area upstream of the 56th St bridge. Over 20 resident volunteers showed up for the event where we cleared and treated invasive bush honeysuckle and porcelain berry. I secured my pesticide applicator license from the Office of the State Chemist prior to the event and look forward to utilizing this license in future similar events.



- ◆ Speaking of invasives, I joined the board of the [State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management](#) non- profit and look forward to helping their effort to develop CISMAs in

each county through a recently signed cooperative agreement with NRCS. Our local [Circle City CISMA](#) accomplished great work in 2022 including several Weed Wrangles© led by CISMA partner City of Indianapolis Office of Land Stewardship.



- ◆ Working with Friends of White River, Inc. we held three Stream Steward Workshops at various locations along Fall Creek and the White River in 2022 based on our [Stream Steward Guide](#) released last year and funded by the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust. They were well attended and we’ve conducted several follow up site visits with riparian property owners. On a sad note, we lost a true partner in our conservation work in the passing of Mary Durkin with whom we have worked on various stream and pond workshops over the last few years. Mary was truly a champion of conservation in action and she is already missed-we will continue in the years ahead to memorialize her spirit in the conservation work we do. Read more about Mary’s life and her impact as well as a restoration fund setup in her memory on page 3.

- ◆ Completed our first Rainscaping workshop with Purdue Extension in June 2022 along with a rain barrel workshop held the same month in partnership with [Reconnecting to Our Waterways \(ROW\)](#) and [Kheprw Institute \(KI\)](#). Both events were held at the Indiana State Fairgrounds where we work throughout the year on the Pathway to Water Quality exhibit.

(Continued on page 4)

Urban Conservation Report

By Alena Jones

In 2022 the urban conservation program conducted more than 400 erosion and sediment control inspections, including routine inspections of active construction sites and inspections to look into public complaints made either to the District or to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. We also reviewed stormwater pollution prevention plans for 30 projects, helping ensure that public projects in the City of Indianapolis are taking appropriate steps to protect our soil and water. As part of the District's partnership with the city, program staff completed training for city staff and inspectors on erosion and sediment pollution prevention measures to be aware of while they are out inspecting construction sites, increasing the number of trained eyes that can spot issues on site and help projects stay in compliance.

Behind-the-scenes work in 2022 included working with City colleagues to attain the highest-ever compliance rates for public projects during a time of historically high investment in public infrastructure. Congratulations to our colleagues for their hard work on protecting Indiana's soil and water! Urban conservation staff worked with the City's MS4 coordinator to identify and connect with developers and discuss compliance trends on

various private projects - noting both instances in which excellent work practices were in place, and instances where developers had room to improve. Compliance rates were up for private projects in 2022 as compared to the prior year. Urban conservation staff also worked to connect industry professionals to information about the changes implemented with the switch from Rule 5 to the Construction Stormwater General Permit, which was put in place at the end of 2021.



Remembering Mary

In December 2022, the district lost a great friend and conservation partner in Mary Durkin. We worked together with Mary over the last eight years on various projects and workshops, highlighting her amazing passion and knowledge on the value of pollinators and their benefits in nature. Mary's work "walked the talk" as she worked tirelessly at her riverfront community Spirit Lake on projects to change the way condo communities think about landscaping. We often



point Marion County residents inquiring about pollinators to her work as an example of what's possible in a HOA or condominium setting where traditional landscaping is the norm.

We supported Mary initially through a Clean Water Indiana cost share grant, then called on her expertise as a presenter in 2019 at a pond workshop along the Eagle Creek trail. Finally, we were blessed to work with Mary on a Stream Steward workshop in the fall 2021, highlighting all of her efforts at Spirit

Lake. Our partner, Friends of White River, has fulfilled Mary's wishes by establishing the *Bloom Where You are Planted* fund to support future efforts on Stream Steward projects. You can read Mary's obituary and more about the fund [HERE](#).



Mary presenting at a 2019 Pond Workshop

An Ounce of Prevention Worth a Pound of Cure

By Julie Farr, Resource Conservationist

When building a home there are so many decisions to make that often what seems to be insignificant choices, made without much study or thought, end up being major problems down the road. Our office is routinely called by homeowners with major problems that could have been avoided if more information was available from the start.

Choosing a lot: Just as important as what neighborhood or school system the lot is in is the topography and soil type because these things will determine if there is likely to be flooding or drainage problems which can cause mold issues in the home later on.

Choosing the location and type of foundation: Based on the topography and soil type, the best location and type of home chosen for a specific lot can be made. You don't want your home to be a dam where surface water from above drains down right up against your foundation. You also will want to be especially mindful of the soil type of a lot if you plan to build a home with a basement. A soil type with a seasonally high groundwater table will be a major headache for those with basements, while building the home a few blocks higher than "normal" will provide enough room to have a dry crawl space.

Saving the topsoil: Lots which have had the topsoil removed leave new homeowners with a very difficult task in trying to establish a beautiful lawn. Subsoil has little to offer new seedlings or sod, making it necessary to water and fertilize often.

Trees: Which trees should stay and which should be removed before building begins? Removing dead and diseased trees after homes have been built is extremely expensive and potentially dangerous. Having existing mature trees evaluated and then protecting the healthy ones will again save you money and peace of mind down the road.

Choosing landscaping: Incorporating many native plants, trees and shrubs into your new yard will also be a great benefit in the long run. Natives are more disease and insect resistant, provide excellent erosion control, and create habitat for wildlife, birds and beneficial insects.

[Our website](#) provides valuable information for those choosing a homesite and also for those who have found difficulties with an older home. You can also [contact me](#) with any specific questions or problems. On site visits can be provided as needed.



District Manager's Report

Continued from page 2

- ◆ We completed several projects funded through a SEP agreement with ROW and local company. These included a rain garden at a local elementary school in the Fall Creek watershed and native plantings and a vegetated filter strip at Barton Park located along Fall Creek downtown.

Keep up with our workshops & activities on our [website](#).

Thank You 2022 Donors!

Angela Capps

Judith Houser

Vernon Pipkin

Randy Johnson

McKelvey Poetry

Soil Health Report

By Kevin Allison

Here at the SWCD, we care a great deal about urban agriculture and local growers. We strive to provide technical assistance, resources, educational opportunities, and networking experiences to support Marion County farmers and gardeners in their quests to be productive and sustainable. This year has been an adventure in realizing that mission.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service sure kept me busy in 22, in a good way. One of my responsibilities is to support the Indiana USDA-NRCS in the development of their incentive programs, technical standards, and associated trainings for conservation practices in urban agriculture. We hit it hard this year. A small, dedicated group from the State Office and a handful of valued partners, including our SWCD, worked tirelessly to adapt federal assistance to smaller scales of agriculture. There are now enhanced options within USDA financial incentive programs for growers seeking to address natural resource concerns. We also prioritized increasing the technical capacity of all Indiana NRCS staff and critical partners in how to assess soil and water resource concerns and provide conservation solutions on small and urban farms. We built trainings and delivered them across the state, drawn from our own expertise as well as from our experiences with expert growers, and featuring new tools like my soon to be released excel sheet for creating cover crop mixes. Along the way, we built comradery and are proud of our accomplishments, which got recognition on a national level. We also know that there's plenty of more work to be done, to which we welcome.

Professional development in the realm of small farms can be truly inspiring. I took a couple important trips to gain knowledge from two of the best soil health centric growers in the country. Daniel Mays' "No-till Intensive Workshop" at his beautiful Frith Farm in Maine and Jesse Frost's "No-till for Vegetable Growers Workshop" in Louisiana provided a wealth of practical information focused on crop planning, soil preparation, fertility, biology, mulching, cover crops, healthy transplants, irrigation, tools, labor, and much more. The SWCD demo garden very much resembles Daniel's farm in terms of technique and aesthetic, but to witness cover crops and mulch as the anchor for fertility and weed management on three acres of no-till organic vegetables was nothing short of spectacular. Jesse's three day workshop was hands-on and spot-on and provided refreshing ideas on how to run an effective on-farm training. In addition to the SWCD's improved technical capacity, an added outcome is a connection to two excellent growers, both of whom are on board to host 2023 workshops specifically for

Indiana growers and educators. None of this is possible without educational funding secured through our strong relationships with organizations like the USDA-NRCS, Urban Soil Health, [ACAM](#), and SARE, which all realize that continuous training is vital in our efforts to help improve soil health.

Though at times beneficial, we by no means need to leave the state of Indiana to learn how to farm. One of my favorite workshops this year was held in Indianapolis in partnership with Urban Soil Health and Purdue Extension. Entitled "Crop to Crop", Marion County urban growers shared insight into how to plan for and grow their favorite crops, with additional valuable discussion around opportunities and challenges within urban agriculture. A trek in a 15-passenger van full of vegetable growers to a northern Indiana farm also makes my list of notable events. Though we picked a very chilly day, to see how the farmer is employing soil health practices to convert multiple beds to no-till was significant. Fortunately, some were located in the warmth of a high tunnel, which provided us much needed relief from the wind during that November cold snap.

My season at the SWCD demonstration garden season was enjoyable and constructive. Each year, the soil feels healthier, enriched with dark organic matter, and easier to plant. The soil kept covered with crops, cover crops, mulches, and compost all year long, and harvests were bountiful. I love to visit farms and help growers think through soil health, and I love to host growers in the demo garden. Thanks to all the farmers and gardeners who have engaged with me or joined me for workshops. I've had the opportunity to speak at some fantastic events, including Black Loam, Get the Dirt, and multiple garden tours. I hope to see you all and more again in '23.

"Don't think the garden loses its ecstasy in winter. It's quiet, but the roots are down there riotous." Rumi



Conservation Ag Movement in Marion County

By Jerod Chew, NRCS District Conservationist

So many fantastic conservation stories could be shared from Marion County in 2022. I have the good fortune to regularly visit with a wide array of folks interested in improving natural resources within Marion County. On many of these visits, I am providing conservation guidance and advice on interests such as invasive species control, erosion control, wildlife habitat improvement, soil health and plant productivity.

While I hope that my guidance and advice are helpful, I believe that many times the best and most valuable information comes from sharing with other growers and land stewards, so I would like to highlight one such event from 2022 called “Diversified Farming in the Inner City”.

This event was an Indianapolis bus tour of 4 inner city farms. The event was limited to 50 participants due to the bus capacity and it was booked up with folks even following in cars too! Participants received hands-on growing advice from small-scale farmers and soil health leaders (Kevin Allison, Marion SWCD included) in a variety of conditions from containers to in-the-ground beds. Information was also shared about ways to improve soil conditions through cover crops, mulches, compost as well



as details about NRCS technical and financial assistance.

This event was made possible through an initiative called America’s Conservation Ag Movement and more information can be found, including videos here: [Indiana - America's Conservation Ag Movement \(americasconservationagmovement.com\)](https://americasconservationagmovement.com) .

This is just one example of the many conservation opportunities happening in Marion County and around the state to provide great connections for farmers and land stewards of all sizes.





Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District 2022 Annual Activities Report

January 1 through December 31, 2022

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 2022 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. 2022 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
Urban Soil Health Program			
• Urban Soil Health Program – Presentations/Workshops	31	during year	Outreach/Training
• Urban Soil Health Program – Consultations/Site Visits	32/21	during year	Outreach/Training
• YouTube Presentation Views	1921	during year	Primarily Soil Health topics
Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program			
• City of Indianapolis-DPW & DCE - ILA & NPDES Report	3 items	during year	ILA, budget, and report
• City of Indianapolis-DPW Water Quality Meetings	20 meetings	during year	Water Quality Issues
Other Projects & Coordination with Conservation Organizations			
• Rainscaping Workshops	1	during year	17 attendees
• Stream Steward Workshops	3	during year	43 total attendees
• Rain Barrel Workshop	1	during year	17 attendees
• Indiana Association of Conservation Districts (IASWCD) Conference	3 days	1/9-11	Board & Staff Training
• Marion Co. SWCD Annual Meeting w- Annual Report	129 Virtual	2/15	Reported accomplishments
• Distributed newsletter on activities & watershed programs	4 / yr	during year	1507 on mailing list
• Marion County SWCD Website	10,870 users	during year	Public Outreach



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)	# Residents Serviced via Group or HOA	Preliminary Plat Reviews (@ 0.75 hrs)
Center	2	10	3	0	3	15
Decatur	5	7	5	0	14	2
Franklin	5	31	29	3	57	9
Lawrence	4	22	19	7	81	6
Perry	3	17	14	1	20	4
Pike	3	10	8	3	27	1
Warren	4	17	12	1	49	8
Washington	5	46	41	7	180	11
Wayne	3	10	7	0	17	0
TOTAL	34	170	138	22	448	57

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

# SWP3* Reviews Provided (@ 3 hrs)	# Erosion Control/ Pollution Prevention Inspections Completed (@ 1.5 hrs)	# Public Complaints Responded to (@ 0.75 hr)	# Technical Assistance Site Visits Made (@ 0.5 hr)
30	390	26	10

Notes: *SWP3 = Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans

III. State/Federal Cost Share/Grant Projects- SWCD brought into county additional: \$125,682.74

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
Clean Water Indiana Grant (CWI)	\$10,000.00	General District Operational Funds
USDA-NRCS Soil Health Contribution Agreement	\$98,477.76	Urban Soil Health Program - Staff, Technical Assistance, Demonstration, Adult Education
ISDA – DOSC Regional Support	\$3,700.00	Technical & SWCD Support Staff
EQIP – USDA-NRCS	\$10,810.63	Cost Share – 18.3 acres
NRCS Staff Support	\$53,416.00	District Conservationist

EACH CITY/COUNTY TAX DOLLAR INVESTED IN THE SWCD LEVERAGES \$2.18 IN OTHER FUNDING

SWCD SUPERVISORS

AND ASSOCIATE SUPERVISORS

Chairperson — Olivia Speckman is a scientist at V3 Companies. Olivia works with developers, property owners, and regulatory agencies in order to maintain or improve water, stream, and wooded area quality throughout the Midwest. Olivia places importance on bettering the conditions of waterways by gathering with other advocates through Reconnecting to Our Waterways and volunteering for cleanups that directly affect the local waterways. Olivia has a BS degree in Biology from Ball State University and a certification in Watershed Management through the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy. Olivia brings experience with ArcGIS, AutoCAD, waterway permitting, and stakeholder coordination to the SWCD Board. Olivia currently resides in her hometown of Lawrence with her family and enjoys improving her community through her work on the SWCD board.

Vice-Chair — 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.

Secretary — Heather Buck is a Resource Planner with Christopher B. Burke Engineering working with the MS4 Coordinators from several NPDES Phase II communities in Indiana to develop and implement all components of their Stormwater Quality Management Programs (SWQMP). She completes erosion and sediment control inspections on behalf of both public agencies and private development. Heather completes various water quality evaluations through chemical, physical, and biological data collection and analysis; including IDDE screening, QHEI, macroinvertebrate, and fish community sampling.

Treasurer — Tyler Gough oversees the planning and operation of all aspects of Indy Urban Acres, a project of the Parks Alliance of Indianapolis. Gough was hired by the Parks Alliance in 2011 to transform eight acres of unused city park land into a sustainable, urban farm. Today, IUA is a system of four organic farms on the east, west, and south sides of Indianapolis that grows and harvests fruits and vegetables to feed more than 50,000 individuals who are food insecure. IUA produces an average of 40,000 pounds of produce, which is delivered to food pantries and directly to families via the Veggie Box program. Gough is driven by the belief that that each member of our community should be able to attain proper nutrition for themselves and their families, and to have access to the educational tools necessary to provide for themselves.

Board Member — Brian Neilson, 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.

ASSOCIATE SUPERVISORS

Paula Baldwin

Rick Bein

Marvin Brethauer

Bob Eddleman

Mark Kautz

Robert Kleinops

Beth Mason

Scott Minor

Mark Mongin

Dennis Slaughter

Henry Wallis

Blake Wilson

SWCD STAFF

John Hazlett, District Manager

Kevin Allison, Soil Health Specialist

Alena Jones, Urban Conservationist

Julie Farr, Conservationist

Jerod Chew, District Conservationist