



MARION COUNTY
SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Conservation in the Neighborhood

VOL. 44, NO. 4



AUTUMN, 2023

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We Are Moving!

After over 6 years at our office space on Madison Ave, the Marion County SWCD is moving! We'll be joining DPW Engineering on the 14th floor of the City County Building starting October 18th. Remember, the easiest way to contact our SWCD is through our website at <https://marionswcd.org/contact/>

You can also still give us a ring at 317/786-1776 and note our new address:

Marion County SWCD

200 East Washington St. Suite 1401

Indianapolis, IN 46201



SWCD's Pond Workshop

The SWCD often receives requests for assistance with retention pond problems including erosion, nuisance wildlife, and pond weeds or algae. Once a new neighborhood is completed, the landowners or HOA become responsible for the drainage and maintenance of the ponds in their development.

To help answer these issues the Marion County SWCD recently held a pond management workshop in Perry Township. A big "Thank You" to our guest presenter Dave Osborne from the Ripley County Extension Service and to Southern Ridge HOA & Perry Township Fire Department for allowing us to use their common area and parking lot.

Unfortunately an unforeseen pop-up storm shortened our evening, but we hope to hold another workshop in the spring. In the meantime, there is information on pond maintenance on our website at <https://marionswcd.org/streams-ponds/>



Welcome Our New Urban Conservationist—Rob Kendall

We'd like to welcome our new Urban Conservationist Rob Kendall to the SWCD! Rob will be inspecting construction sites for sediment and erosion control, reviewing Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs) and working closely with City of Indianapolis staff to ensure compliance with the Construction Stormwater General Permit. Rob comes to us with great experience in his previous work with Spotts Garden Service and Eco Logic, where he supervised the implementation of green infrastruc-

ture and native plant restoration projects. Rob holds a BA in Environmental and Sustainability Studies from IU Bloomington-

joining all the other members on staff who also graduated from IU (Go Hoosiers!). Welcome Rob!



Upcoming Stream Stewardship Workshops: Oct. 28th & Nov. 4th

Don't miss an opportunity to attend our free Stream Steward Workshops in partnership with Friends of White River and funded by the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust. These popular workshops provide education on how to become a more responsible riparian property owner, including native and invasive plant identification and streambank stabilization and riparian restoration strategies. The workshops will be held on Fall Creek (October 28th) and White River at Oliver's Woods (November 4th). Register today-space is limited!

October 28th Fall Creek workshop registration link: [HERE](#)

November 4th White River at Oliver's Woods workshop registration link: [HERE](#)



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Conservation!
Become a
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[Click Here to
see details on
our website.](#)

Enroll Now for the 2024 Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy

If you're interested in water quality and watersheds, consider applying for the 2024 Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy. The Academy, organized by Purdue University with support from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and other Indiana conservation agencies and organizations, gives participants the chance to:

- ⇒ Engage with watershed topics covering leadership principles, watershed science, organization and communication, technology and GIS, stakeholder involvement techniques and policy skills
- ⇒ Meet, learn from, and engage with others who work in watershed management
- ⇒ Interact with topic experts
- ⇒ Gain strategies, skills, and resources for successful watershed management
- ⇒ Earn a Professional Certificate in Watershed Management

Learn more about the program and register by the 11/3 deadline [HERE](#)



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**04
NOVEMBER
2023**

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Register [HERE](#)

Soil Testing

By Kevin Allison, Urban Soil Health Specialist

Butler Soil Testing Program for Urban Farms

Soil testing can be very useful. Seven years ago, my garden had a pH of 7.5, so I used sulfur to decrease it towards 7 to promote a more favorable condition for plants to uptake nutrients. When I tested two years ago, pH was at 6.9. I'm looking forward to testing again to see if my past sulfur applications are still having an acidifying effect or if the high pH irrigation water and natural calcareous soil tendencies are pushing pH back up again. I'll then know if I'm still in balance or if it is time to add more sulfur. Through testing, I know that my phosphorus and potassium levels in the soil are high enough that I don't need to add any more. So now I just focus on getting the nitrogen right. That was a result of adding compost to my beds, which did a great job of raising organic matter levels from 2.9% to over 5%. The test also told me the soil was low in nutrients like sulfur and boron, so I added it and now the soil test shows them in the optimum range. It'd be great to have a discussion or workshop with vegetable growers and gardeners that focuses on nutrient management in the near future, so stay tuned.

I'm going to test my soils this coming spring through Butler University's new grant for free soil testing for urban farms. From January to April 2024. Dr. Sean Berthrong, Butler Microbiologist, and interns will be helping to collect and send off soil samples. The goal is to help urban farmers test and evaluate soil health, nutrients, and/or contamination. Please fill out this questionnaire if you are interested in soil testing, and they'll be in touch in late October. The Marion County SWCD and Butler's Center for Urban Ecology and Sustainability will be assisting with the project!

Butler Soil Test Form: <https://forms.gle/mn4SrYjao2Whj5B9>

Also, never forget about our great [IUPUI lead testing](#) resource if you have soil contamination concerns.

If you have any questions about Butler's program, feel

free to contact me.

ISDA Soil Testing Program

Another opportunity for free soil testing is through the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), who have worked with partners and the Gulf Hypoxia Program (GHP) to develop a project with a focus on soil sampling and nutrient management. This soil testing program can assist row crop fields, pastures, and specialty crops.

<https://www.in.gov/isda/divisions/soil-conservation/indiana-soil-sampling-program/>



Soil Health in Autumn

By Kevin Allison, Urban Soil Health Specialist

At a late-September small farm training for SWCDs and conservation partners, Dan Perkins of Perkin's Good Earth Farm began the farm tour in a wooded area near his vegetable fields. In addition to being a relaxing way to start a workshop, it served as a reminder to be intentional about working with nature instead of against it. Composted leaves are an integral part of the mulch that cover Dan's growing beds and are critical to protecting his soil and suppressing weeds.

Every fall, I add leaves from surrounding neighborhoods to my compost pile. I am especially fond of shredded or mowed leaves because they start decomposing and becoming compost much quicker than whole leaves. These 1st year new leaves go on the starting side of the compost area to begin their two to three year journey to finished compost. Over time, I'll add vegetable scraps and even a couple bags of a nutrient rich compost to the pile to add nitrogen, diversity of material, and to speed up the decomposition process. I turn it occasionally over time. The more mature, finer compost is what I like to use for beds in which I'm direct seeding crops like carrots or spinach. The newer, less broken down leaf mulch is great for winter cover, or in beds that can be transplanted. If you don't plant a cover crop in an empty winter bed, straw or leaf mulch are great options.

If you can plant a cover crop, then do it! If you have any questions about how to manage cover crops, don't hesitate to reach out!



Dan speaking about natural systems and how he applies the same kinds of processes to his farm.



Cover crops and leaf compost at Dan's farm.



After carrots (left) and beets (right), both beds were planted to cover crops. The carrot tops were returned to the bed for mulch after planting the cover crop seeds.



Check out our website for information and guides on soil health practices, including a new Cover Crop Tool for Small Farms and Gardens that can help you as you design cover crop mixes and determine seeding rates.

<https://marionswcd.org/soil-health-guide/>



MARION COUNTY
SOIL AND WATER
—CONSERVATION DISTRICT—

200 East Washington St. Suite 1401
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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.

**** PLEASE NOTE ****

SWCD staff work in the office, remotely, and in the field.

To reach us, email marioncountyswcd@iaswcd.org, utilize our website's 'Contact' tab, or call 317-786-1776 to leave a message when staff members are not in the office.

Prepping Construction Sites for Winter

The leaves are changing, temperatures are dropping, and yet many of our construction sites are still as active as they were this summer. Now is the time to complete all temporary seeding on areas which will not be disturbed for several months. You can seed cereal rye or wheat through October. Be sure to fertilize, mulch and maintain moisture in the soil. Vegetation is one of the very best erosion control practices to keep sediment in place.

Perimeter erosion control practices should be installed and regularly checked, especially after storm events. Erosion control at storm sewer inlets is critical. Dandy bags, other inlet protections and check dams must be cleaned out regularly. Common complaints of drainage swales with too little fall in elevation and excessive sedimentation of retention ponds can be attributed to erosion from individual lots during home construction. Builders as well as developers need to be vigilant in providing erosion control during the entire construction process.

Stone construction entrances and individual driveways need to meet or exceed minimum size & depth require-



Erosion Control measures need to be in place to keep sediment on the lots.

ments according to the amount and type of traffic anticipated. All construction & delivery vehicles should stay on the stone drives to keep the streets as clean as possible.

Changes may need to be made to the erosion control plan for critical areas which have practices which continually fail.

Residents can report sediment leaving construction sites to the [SWCD](http://www.marionswcd.org).



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