



MARION COUNTY  
SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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SUMMER, 2020



# Conservation in the Neighborhood

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## Good News for Soil Health & Agriculture

*By Kevin Allison*

I was at a local vegetable farm last week helping a grower think through a fall cover crop plan. I took a few minutes to just observe the farm, and I couldn't help but notice the incredible volume of fresh



produce being harvested and packaged. Despite the circumstances of 2020, our resilient, local farms are producing tons of food. For you folks who support local growers through your consumer choices, thank you. For you growers who could use a little assistance in soil and water conservation and overall fertility, please don't hesitate to reach out to your SWCD at [kevin-allison@iaswcd.org](mailto:kevin-allison@iaswcd.org). We are here to help with soil health and conservation practices such as:

- Crop Rotation
- Cover Crops
- Mulching
- Nutrient Management
- Native and Targeted Plantings for Beneficial Insects and Pollinators
- Reducing Tillage

We've had our hands in the soil again this year. We are continuing to plant hundreds

of native wildflowers and grasses at Indy Urban Acres with funding assistance from the National Association of Conservation District grant. The SWCD just did an article for The Old Farmer's Almanac about this effort to attract beneficial insects and pollinators on vegetable farms and are looking forward to seeing it this winter in their 2021 Garden Guide.

Indiana's Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative teamed up with Hoosier Ag Today for a series of soil health podcasts. Check them out at either of the following links and be on the lookout for an upcoming podcast with Dan Perkins of Perkin's Good Earth Farm and myself on cover cropping on small farms.

<https://www.ccsin.org/podcast>  
<https://www.hoosieragtoday.com/category/hat-soil-health-podcast/>

# Lower Fall Creek Watershed Management Plan Update

*By John Hazlett, District Manager*

Throughout 2020, our district has been working with Christopher Burke Engineering and the ROW Fall Creek waterway committee on an update of the 2009 Lower Fall Creek Watershed Management Plan. An updated watershed inventory has been completed along with identification of water quality concerns and potential critical areas to improve and protect the water quality of Lower Fall Creek.

We are asking stakeholders to participate in a short online survey to provide input on the plan update and explore an interactive story map of the watershed to inventory concerns and critical areas.

A link to the survey is available here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/fallcreekplan>



The storymap is available [HERE](#) with instructions for utilizing this unique too. Help us in our efforts to improve this important local waterway!

## Cover Crop Seed Give Away Cancelled

Unfortunately, the SWCD Cover Crop Seed Giveaway needed to be cancelled for 2020. There are a lot of new gardens popping up and I truly believe that cover crops have a big role to play in the overall fertility and sustainability of a garden. That was a hard decision to make, and we expect to resume the program in 2021. This fall, we encourage you to look to your local garden stores or online seed companies to get seeds.

Support  
Urban  
Conservation  
Become a  
SWCD Affiliate  
Member!

[Click Here to see details on our website.](#)

# DNR, IDEM, and BWQ Sampling White River for Mainstem Project

At the District's 50<sup>th</sup> annual meeting our speakers Brad Beaubien, Director of Destination Development for Visit Indy, and Kevin Hardie, Executive Director for Friends of the White River discussed an update on the White River Vision Plan and memories of the White River chemical discharge that occurred 20 years ago. It's exciting to see how agencies & the community have responded and how monitoring the river water quality is increasing.

Fish community sampling is being conducted by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) fisheries biologists, Indiana Department of Environmental Management's (IDEM) Office of Water Quality and the Muncie Sanitary District's Bureau of Water Quality (BWQ) over the next couple of months for the White River Mainstem Project.

The White River Mainstem Project is a collaborative effort to sample the West Fork White River and White River mainstem from its headwaters to its confluence with the Wabash River. This project is the first of its kind for Indiana, with multiple agencies working together to extensively sample an entire river. It will also be the most comprehensive sampling of the White River that has been done.

Over the coming months, water quality, fish communities, and benthic macroinvertebrates (water insects) will be sampled at 63 sites along the entire 356 miles. Biologists will evaluate different aspects of these rivers, which will help the agencies better understand the water quality and the rivers' ability to support healthy and diverse fish and macroinvertebrate communities. Macroinvertebrates serve as indicators of water quality and overall stream health; because they are at the bottom of the food chain, macroinvertebrates are more sensitive to environmental stress and can influence the fish that feed on them.

DNR will also evaluate sport fishing opportunities for anglers during sampling. Sport fish species like smallmouth bass, spotted bass and channel catfish will have additional information collected (such as age and weight) to provide detailed information about fishing opportunities along the river. Reports will be made available at [on.IN.gov/where2fish](http://on.IN.gov/where2fish) and on the project's StoryMap: [idem.IN.gov/WhiteRiverProject](http://idem.IN.gov/WhiteRiverProject).

IDEM will use monitoring data to provide a comprehensive assessment of the White River's ability to support aquatic life to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This will also tie into BWQ's long-term monitoring project to investigate changes in water quality and fish and macroinvertebrate communities from the headwaters in Winchester to Anderson.

The data provided by this study will be essential for future recommendations to improve the river's health for the fish, wildlife, and human communities that depend on it.

For more information about this project, please visit [idem.IN.gov/WhiteRiverProject](http://idem.IN.gov/WhiteRiverProject).



## Invasives Highlight: Callery Pear



Bradford Pear is a type of Callery Pear which were popular with landscapers because of their spring blooms. It has become an invasive and found to be a weak, short lived variety.

A real love—hate relationship exists with this highly invasive tree. The popular Bradford Pear is a variety of the Callery Pear that came from

Southeast Asia to serve as a root stock for grafted pears for eating and also became a very much used landscape tree. It has beautiful white blooms, glossy green summertime leaves that turn purple in the fall. Only problem is that birds and mammals spread the seed (pears) far and wide where they

invade natural areas, open fields, roadsides and parks. They shade and crowd out natural plants that are much more important to the native ecosystem, The tree is also short lived because of wind and ice damage. This tree should not be planted and many are now being replaced.

Cut stumps can be treated with glyphosate for control. Some good alternative native

small trees include serviceberry, hawthorn and crabapples.



*A typical example of wind damage done to a Bradford Pear tree.*

More information on invasive species is available on our website: <https://marionswcd.org/invasive-species/>

### Marion/Johnson FSA Calendar

The FSA office is currently only open by appointment. Please call them at 317-736-6822.

**September 30** - Final Date to Update PLC Yields

**October 12** - Offices Closed - Columbus Day

**October 12** - Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) 2021 Signup Begins **Ongoing** - Signup for Continuous CRP

**Ongoing** - Signup for Whip+ Disaster Assistance

**Continuous** - Signup for Local County Office FSA Text Alerts by texting INJohnson to 372-669.



# Urban Agriculture Surveys

No doubt that you vegetable farmers have your minds and hands full this year, but if you can grab a moment, the following two surveys are intended to benefit urban agriculture and these organizations could use your valuable input.

## From the Purdue University Specialty Crop Block Grant Urban Soil Health Project

This survey asks urban agriculture farmers from different municipalities across Indiana various questions regarding their operations and challenges they face. The goal of this survey is to identify problems and future research and outreach needs and approaches for urban farmers across the state. These results will help your voices be heard so that urban farming can be improved through awareness and education, if needed.

[https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3PKyNh2UTDNK3T7](https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3PKyNh2UTDNK3T7)

## From the Geography Department at IUPUI

The IUPUI Geography Department is conducting a survey of urban gardens in Marion County, developing a map that connects all the garden information into a GIS computer data base. The purpose of this survey is to assess the bio-physical and social benefits of urban food gardens in Indianapolis. The information will help to communicate diverse benefits of urban agriculture to public, policy makers, and funders. The survey is voluntary and takes around 15 minutes. For more information, please contact:

Bhuwan Thapa, Postdoctoral Fellow ([bhthapa@iu.edu](mailto:bhthapa@iu.edu) / 520.499.7785)

Rick Bein, Emeritus Professor ([rbein@iupui.edu](mailto:rbein@iupui.edu) / 317.285.8223)

## Mysterious Seeds Under Investigation

Many Indiana residents are finding packages of seed in their mailbox that they did not order. According to the [Indianapolis Star](#) this may be part of an Amazon review scam. The packages of seed are often white or yellow and are labeled in Chinese. The State Chemists office and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) office are working together on this with concerns that the seeds may introduce noxious or invasive plant species or plant disease to our country.

### What to do if you receive one of these unsolicited packages?

The OISC & APHIS are treating the packages as **potentially harmful** and they are requesting that any seeds received to be sent to the state lab for identification and evaluation. The OISC is also working on a Press Release to be issued soon.

If you become aware of recipients of unsolicited seed, please encourage them to do the following:

- If they are sealed, do not open
- Do not plant them
- If they are opened, keep them in an air-tight container
- Do not handle them

Mail directly to:

**ATTN: Don Robison**  
**Office of Indiana State Chemist**  
**175 S. University St.**  
**West Lafayette, IN 47907-2063**

- LABEL: "Foreign Seed for ID" on the package.



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

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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.

**\*\* PLEASE NOTE\*\***

Due to the current COVID 19 crisis our office is temporarily closed and staff is working remotely. Use the **“Contact Us”** tab on our website to leave a message & we will get back with you as soon as possible.

## City of Indianapolis MS4 Permit-Reporting Methods for the Public

Did you know the City of Indianapolis stormwater management system includes approximately 1,300 miles of pipe, more than 100,000 stormwater structures, 2 high-hazard dams, about 35 miles of levee and approximately 3,700 miles of public roadway? Stormwater discharges into waters of the State of Indiana through the City of Indianapolis Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) are regulated through an NPDES Permit. To learn more check out the City’s website: <https://www.indy.gov/activity/national-pollutant-discharge-elimination-system-reports>

You can help our local waters by keeping an eye out for illicit discharges and clogged storm drains. Here’s some more helpful information:

For reporting of an illicit discharge, such as an illegal discharge to the storm drain or system, please complete an on-line complaint form at the Mari-

on County Public Health Department (<http://marionhealth.org/water-quality-and-hazardous-materials-management/>) or call 317/221-2266. For storm drain issues, such as clogged catch basin inlets or faded or missing storm drain markers, please contact Citizens Energy Group online at <https://www.citizensenergygroup.com/My-Account/Contact-Us> or call 317/924-3311.

### Late Breaking News!

## District Welcomes Alena Jones to its Conservation Team

Alena Jones will soon be joining the Marion County SWCD as their new Urban Conservationist. She will be in charge of our Rule 5 program which implements regulations for erosion control compliance. Check out our website for further updates.

Follow us on  
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