

Celebrating
50 Years
of Conservation



MARION COUNTY
SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Conservation in the Neighborhood

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Upcoming Gardening Workshops

2022 Fall Gardening Workshops

Join Kevin Allison for tours of the SWCD demo garden, focused on:

- Cover crop planting and management
- Use of tarps for bed preparation and weed control
- Use of compost and mulches
- No-till vegetable planting
- Growing Biodiversity



Register [HERE](#). Sessions are limited to 15 attendees.

Where: The SWCD Demonstration Garden, located within the larger community Mayor's Garden at West 56th and Reed Road

When:
Tuesday, August 23: 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM
Tuesday, August 23: 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

More Sessions to come! Check our website for updates & more information on our Soil Health Initiative: <https://marionswcd.org/soil-health-initiative/>



Cover Crop Seeds

The SWCD will have a limited supply of free cover crop seed packages to be available to attendees of fall SWCD workshops. The packets of oats and crimson clover cover approximately 200 square feet. If you are unable to attend or would like to plant a larger area, check your local garden stores or seed online options such as:

[Greencoverseed.com](https://greencoverseed.com)

[Johnnyseeds.com](https://johnnyseeds.com)

[Highmowingseeds.com](https://highmowingseeds.com)

[Groworganic.com](https://groworganic.com)

Summer Workshops, Training & Volunteer Events



By John Hazlett

The first few weeks of summer were busy ones with various workshops, trainings and volunteer events with our community partners! Here's a quick recap of recent workshops:

May 21st-our final Stream

Steward workshop in collaboration with Friends of White River funded by Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust was held on the banks of the White River at the Indianapolis Art Center. A total of 14 attendees learned about the process of streambank erosion, invasive plant identification and how to improve their own riparian properties through various examples on the art center's grounds. Attendees took home copies of the Stream Steward Guide which is available online [HERE](#)

Look for more Stream Steward workshops in the future in collaboration with Friends of the White River made possible by additional funding from Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust-thank you NMPCT for your gracious support!

June 16th and 17th-a two day workshop in collaboration with Purdue Extension supported by funding from the Indiana State Department of Agriculture's Clean Water Indiana 2022 grant program, a total of 17 attendees learned about design, construction and maintenance of rain gardens for their residential properties. The workshop included rain garden project site visits at Normandy Barn Rain Garden, Butler University's campus Enterprise Rent a Car. The

workshop concluded with a demonstration rain garden

planting at Indy Urban Acres and participants took home native plants from IUA for their home projects. A key technical resource for this workshop was our new rain garden guide found [HERE](#)

June 23rd-our 2021 Clean Water Indiana grant concluded with a rain barrel workshop held with our partners Reconnecting to Our Waterways and Kheprhw Institute at the IN State Fairgrounds where 17 attendees built and took home rain barrels to install at their homes. For more information about how to order rain barrels see the [rain barrel section](#) of our website.

Our staff members also participated in an invasive plant identification training held by SICIM for Indiana Conservation Partnership employees at Shades State Park on June 22nd and deployed skills learned in the training in the United Way of Indiana's Go All IN Volunteer Day at the Fort Harrison Dog Park on June 24th where district, SICIM and DNR employees led volunteer groups removing invasive Asian Bush Honeysuckle.



Don't Miss a Special Native Plant Pop Up Sale this Saturday July 23rd at Indy Urban Acres!

Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Support Urban Conservation Become a SWCD Affiliate Member!

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

Soil Health Focus

By Kevin Allison

Spring Conferences

This spring, I had the opportunity to engage with and present to urban farmers at The Black Loam Conference in Indianapolis and the Get Dirt Conference in West Lafayette. At 'Get Dirt', growers came together to learn about soil remediation from experts and to discuss soil test results from a Purdue University project taking place on 18 Indiana urban farms. 'Black Loam' was held at the Walker Legacy Center and provided a forum for BIPOC farmers to network, share knowledge, and learn about USDA programs and other resources. The Marion County SWCD strives to support educational and community building opportunities like these and recognizes the value of being present. Through the Black Loam Conference, I met multiple farmers who I'm now assisting with conservation planning on their Indianapolis farms. That's what its all about!

Upcoming Events!

Don't miss the 2022 Indiana Cisma Conference coming August 17th-20th including an in person meeting, recorded sessions and statewide field events. District staff will lead field events in partnership with the City's Office of Land Stewardship and Eco Logic LLC.

More information including registration is available [HERE](#)



Middle school students with Westminster Neighborhood Services take home vegetables after a SWCD demo garden tour



Sweet potatoes planted into mulch from a cereal rye cover crop

Demo Garden

The SWCD Demo Garden is in full swing. Onions and garlic beds are harvested and replaced with cover crops. Spring lettuce beds were harvested, temporarily tarped, and then planted to beets. The kale keeps giving and giving. A few hot weeks with no rain served as a good reminder about the importance of soil health. The sponge-like soil and the mulches were extremely beneficial to maintain moisture and reduce the need for watering.

The SWCD partners with the Society of St. Andrew to get produce from the demo garden into food pantries. This is my first year growing sweet potatoes for them, and I'm excited about try planting them after cover crops. In late September, I planted cereal rye into two beds which overwintered and grew to almost 5 feet tall this spring. On the first bed, the cover crop was weed whacked and tarped for a month to terminate it. On the second bed, the cover crop was pressed flat to the ground with a t-post and

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Construction Stormwater Update

By Alena Jones

This year has been a busy one so far! There has been record investment in public infrastructure and an attendant increase in public projects, as well as the private sector construction season being in full swing. Franklin Township in particular is full of new subdivisions in the process of development. This season, we have been seeing short, intense rainstorms occurring after long dry periods. This makes it particularly important to be aware of erosion control measures and to conduct BMP inspections and maintain measures as needed. It can be helpful to walk construction sites during or just after a rain event to see how BMPs are faring under heavy water or sediment volume.

With the construction season and the recent dry spell, we've also been out to address a number of public complaints about dust issues driven by wind erosion. Our program has also received more technical assistance requests than usual, as this is the first full season with the Construction Stormwater General Permit in

effect. Remember, the SWCD is here to help - our job is to assess and provide assistance in relation to construction stormwater compliance, so that problems onsite never become enforcement issues. If you have a question, don't hesitate to reach out to us.

As a resident, if you are notice significant sediment in the air, in culverts, or in bodies of water, please do not hesitate to reach out to us with a complaint (and as many details and photos as possible) so that we can investigate and work with the source of the sediment to prevent or address issues downstream.



Poor erosion control leads to many offsite problems.



For a more information on our Soil Health Program visit:

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



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tarped. Both methods resulted in a 100% termination of the cover crop. It's been over 5 weeks since planting 50 sweet potato slips through dead cover crop mulch, and I'm seeing great crop growth and almost no weeds.

Rewind back to mid-Spring when the cereal rye was rapidly growing. Though cover crops can smother weeds, they might not get them all. It was necessary to spot weed in the cover cropped bed at least once in April to prevent any weeds from going to seed. I could have avoided this by tarping the cover crops early but didn't to allow the cereal rye to grow even taller and provide a thicker, longer lasting mulch.

If fall harvest goes well, I'm happy to say that this cereal rye and sweet potato sequence will become a permanent fixture in my crop rotation.

USDA Report Shows Progress

A new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) report shows use of no-till, crop rotations, more efficient irrigation methods and advanced technologies have climbed in recent years.

The report from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) demonstrates progress made through voluntary conservation over a 10-year period. Findings from the report will inform future conservation strategies, including USDA's efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

The "[Conservation Practices on Cultivated Cropland: A Comparison of CEAP I and CEAP II Survey Data and Modeling](#)" was developed by USDA's Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). It found significant gains for soil health and soil carbon storage, while also identifying areas where additional and targeted nutrient management strategies are needed.

"This latest CEAP report shows that farmers have done an outstanding job over the years in using innovative conservation strategies that help mitigate climate change," said Jerry Raynor, NRCS State Conservationist in Indiana, "But we have more work to do. Reports like this one help us better understand conservation approaches and make improvements to increase positive impacts. This report will help steer our conservation efforts well into the future to help us adapt to changing trends in production, climate and technology."

Key findings include:

- Farmers increasingly adopted advanced technology, including enhanced-efficiency fertilizers and variable rate fertilization to improve efficiency, assist agricultural economies and benefit the environment.
- More efficient conservation tillage systems, particularly no-till, became the dominant form of tillage, improving soil health and reducing fuel use.
- Use of structural practices increased, largely in combination with conservation tillage as farmers increasingly integrated conservation treatments to gain efficiencies. Structural practices include terraces, filter and buffer strips, grassed waterways and field borders.
- Irrigation expanded in more humid areas, and as irrigators shifted to more efficient systems and improved water management strategies, per-acre water application rates decreased by 19% and withdrawals by 7 million-



acre-feet.

- Nearly 70% of cultivated cropland had conservation crop rotations, and 28% had high-biomass conservation crop rotations.

Because of this increased conservation, the report estimates:

- Average annual water (sheet and rill) and wind erosion dropped by 70 million and 94 million tons, respectively, and edge-of-field sediment loss declined by 74 million tons.
- Nearly 26 million additional acres of cultivated cropland were gaining soil carbon, and carbon gains on all cultivated cropland increased by over 8.8 million tons per year.
- Nitrogen and phosphorus losses through surface runoff declined by 3% and 6%, respectively.
- Average annual fuel use dropped by 110 million gallons of diesel fuel equivalents, avoiding associated greenhouse gas emissions of nearly 1.2 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalents.

Next Steps

The report also revealed that cropping patterns have changed over the years in response to climate, policy, trade, renewable energy and prices, presenting a nutrient management challenge. Improving the timing and application method of nutrients can allow production demands to be met while reducing the impacts of crop production on the environment. NRCS plans to continue its focus on nutrient management conservation practices and strategies with vigorous outreach efforts to farmers and further engagement with partner groups to adjust to these changing trends.

For the full report click [HERE](#)





MARION COUNTY
SOIL AND WATER
—CONSERVATION DISTRICT—

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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.

Please email marioncountyswcd@iaswcd.org, utilize our 'Contact' tab above, or call 317-786-1776 to leave a message when staff are not in the office.

Pond Maintenance

By Julie Farr

During the summer months our office often receives questions regarding maintenance of private and neighborhood ponds. Common questions arise involving controlling erosion on the pond banks, minimizing nuisance wildlife, and excessive pond weeds and algae.

Erosion of the pond banks can be caused by a number of problems. The banks may be too steep to be stable. If there's room, banks should be pulled back – preferably to 4:1 slopes. When turf grass is grown all the way to the waters' edge it provides little erosion control because its root system is very shallow.

Nuisance wildlife is often related to erosion. Muskrats burrow into the pond banks. An overabundance of geese can destroy vegetation around the pond making the banks more susceptible to erosion.

Excessive pond weeds and algae are common problems in ponds where neighboring properties use lawn fertilizers which migrate their way into the pond. Nitrogen rich runoff comes from lawns surrounding



Buffer Strips around ponds control erosion & filter out pollutants & fertilizer

the pond and also from other parts of the subdivision which drain to the pond via storm sewers.

A pond's best friend is native vegetation. Buffer strips around the pond filter out pollutants and control erosion with their deep root systems. Bioswales and rain gardens in subdivisions also filter the runoff that eventually makes its way to the pond and also slows down the water and helps retain more of it onsite which decreases flooding. Slowing down the runoff allows sediment and the pollutants attached to those particles to settle out before it reaches streams and ponds. Tall buffer strips around the pond also discourage geese from visiting the area.

For more information visit this month's [blog post](#) on our website.

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