

Marion County SWCD

2018 - 2020

PLAN OF WORK



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



# Plan of Work 2018-2020

## Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District

**Who We Are:** A district constitutes a governmental subdivision of the state and a public body corporate and politic exercising public powers (IC 14-32-5). As a local unit of state government, we are financially supported primarily by City-County with some funds from state government.

**What We Do:** We provide the public information about soil, water and related natural resource conservation; identify and prioritize local soil and water resource concerns; and connect land users to sources of education, technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices and technologies. Additional services include land use and natural resource planning, wildlife habitat and pond management consulting. We work closely with local government, community organizations and residents to help create a better environment for the citizens in our county.

**Mission Statement:** To assist Marion County land users in conserving soil, water and related natural resources by providing technical, financial and educational resources.

**Critical Natural Resource Issues:** As an urban SWCD, the critical issues historically facing our district include streambank erosion and destabilization, stormwater runoff and sediment loss from construction and developed sites, nuisance drainage conditions on private property, and soil health challenges (i.e. tillage, nutrient management, bare soils) associated with urban agricultural practices. More recently within the last three years, invasives management and disappearing pollinator habitat have become pressing natural resource concerns in the area we serve.

**Governance and Administration Priorities:** The District supports the City of Indianapolis by reviewing erosion and sediment control plans and completing construction site inspections for projects subject to 327 IAC 15-5 ("Rule 5"). The District also performs site inspections of private projects subject to Rule 5. The District provides training for contractors in the field and through regularly scheduled trainings with DPW and BNS. The District assists with education and outreach efforts tied to the City's NPDES stormwater permit and provides technical assistance for drainage complaints on private property. Additionally, the District partners with USDA-NRCS, ISDA, Purdue Extension and other entities to support the Indiana Conservation Partnership, whose mission is to provide technical, financial and educational assistance to promote conservation. The governing body for the District consists of (5) supervisors who meet monthly and communicate weekly on district operations and programs. The supervisors oversee the District's staff (currently 3.5 FTEs) and staff-supervisor communications occur regularly via the District Manager, who was hired in March 2018.

**Land Operator and Resource Owner Priorities:**

*Private landowners, homeowners, public agencies, and organizations that own and/or have direct oversight of natural resources.*

Local drainage problems impact property values and are a threat to resident healthy and safety. The District will help address water quality and quantity problems caused by stormwater runoff by providing assistance on the planning and implementation of low impact development practices such as rain gardens, rain barrels, swales and detention ponds. Streambank erosion is also a priority and offers the opportunity to educate residents on the floodplain development practices, riparian restoration opportunities and in stream solutions to address flooding and erosion. Various stakeholders are concerned with establishing backyard and open space pollinator habitat including permaculture guilds and layered pollinator plantings for beneficial insects. Additionally, there is great demand for our soil health program that targets urban commercial growers and community gardeners by providing technical resources and demonstration sites; this program can also be integrated with the City's NPDES stormwater permit education requirements in the future to highlight runoff reductions resulting from soil health best management practices. All resources developed to address these priorities will be showcased on the District's website, further demonstrating our role as technical information clearinghouse.

**Public Stakeholder Priorities:**

*Groups, organizations, and the general public without specific control or oversight of specific natural resources.*

The District is frequently contacted by residents concerned about storm sewer maintenance responsibilities, addressing drainage concerns on private property and proper maintenance of drainage practices such as ponds and rain gardens. Coordinating with the City of Indianapolis, the District provides technical information regarding the City's O&M responsibilities and assists with City messaging on storm sewer care and maintenance responsibilities. Education on Citizens Energy Group's Correct Connect program as well as proper septic tank maintenance and invasives management are also high public stakeholder priorities. Future soil health outreach will be prioritized in the City's many documented food desert areas, including the UNWA and Near Eastside neighborhoods where the District conducted permaculture charrettes funded by the NACD Urban Agriculture grant.

**Marketing and Communication Priorities:**

*Developing relationships with community groups and leaders, public officials and creating general awareness with all stakeholders and local residents.*

The District traditionally publishes a quarterly newsletter and holds an annual meeting to update stakeholders. New marketing opportunities are available through social media and non-traditional activities such as monthly blogs, film screenings, soil health workshops, documentaries/You Tube videos and guild plant sales. The District's current office location at the City's Department of Public Works allows for daily communication with various City departments including DPW, Parks and BNS. Marketing the District through regular interaction with City Councillors is a major priority to maintain and increase the current level of funding for city operations. These opportunities include presentations at committee meetings as well as follow up letters with the District Annual Report. District employees will also continue to serve on local boards and steering committees to further solidify the District's presence.

**Partnerships and Collaborations Priorities:**

*Coordinated efforts with other districts and/or organizations and agencies. Efforts may include funding, staffing or implementation.*

The District's key partners include regional districts with an urban focus (primarily Hamilton and Hendricks County), local non-profit advocacy groups focused on improving water quality (Hoosier Heartland RC&D, Reconnecting to Our Waterways), city agencies such as DPW and Indy Parks, and local universities. Given the current focus on local waterbodies by Partners for the White River and the DigIndy program being implemented by Citizens Energy Group, the District is in a unique position to strengthen existing and forge new partnerships by serving as a clearinghouse for technical information and connecting efforts to improve watershed health. New funding priorities include engaging local philanthropic and grassroots organizations and partnering on IDEM 319 planning and/or implementation grants with ROW waterway committees. The Clean Water Indiana program and the State Soil Conservation Board will continue to be a key traditional partnership for the District.

**Leadership Development Priorities:**

*This includes developing leadership and management skills of board supervisors and volunteers.*

In addition to representation as the annual IASWCD conference, board supervisors will also prioritize formal ISDA supervisor trainings and workshops based on board development needs. Additionally, a semi-annual review of the current Business Plan will be undertaken to allow for staff and board updates.

Efficient, streamlined communication and accountability are key priorities for the board and a proposed committee structure with monthly report out requirements at board meetings is described below:

**Technology** (website/office equipment)- John/Julie/Brian/Cheyenne/Kevin

**Finance** (budget/fundraising/leveraging for Annual Report)-John/Brian

**Education/Outreach** (grants, marketing)-Kevin/NRCS/Heather/Scott

**HR/Staffing** (benefits, policy updates)-Blake/Maggie/Brian/John

**Annual Meeting/Election** (supervisor election, schedule)-Maggie and Cheyenne

**Technical** (Soil Health/SWPPP Training)-John/Brian/Kevin/Cheyenne/Julie

**Staff Development Priorities:**

*This includes board oversight and professional staff development.*

The board will continue prioritizing staff development by conducting annual reviews with the board chair and at least one board supervisor using the current staff review form. District staff will also prepare a self review for discussion.

Staff development will be prioritized throughout the year through formal trainings including WordPress website training and trainings for current staff member accreditations such as the National Green Infrastructure Certification Program through Water Environment Federation and Certified Erosion, Sediment and Stormwater Inspector through EnviroCert. NRCS Certified Conservation Planning Program may also be considered. Additional staff training will be available through SICUM's Indiana Invasives Initiative, IUPUI Philanthropy and Fundraising Program and the Indiana Conservation Partnership.

## **Specific Three Year Goals for Addressing our Priorities**

**By December 31, 2020 we will accomplish the following goals, described below with responsible personnel. Staff personnel will meet at the beginning of each year to develop a calendar timeline with milestone dates for specific goals.**

DM-District Manager

UC-Urban Conservationist

SHS-Soil Health Specialist

RC-Resource Conservationist

### Governance and Administration

- Develop and adopt annual district budget based on year prior expenses and anticipated income by December for the following year (DM with Finance Committee)
- Develop and deliver quarterly Rule 5 activity report to City of Indianapolis (UC) and meet biannually with City per MOU (DM, UC and Board Chair)
- Conduct annual contractor training session for contractors and RPRs (UC)
- Annual presentations to City Council committee, Office of Sustainability and Renew Indianapolis (DM, SHS and Board Finance Committee)
- Determine flood insurance discount program opportunities (DM and Board Chair)

### Land Operator and Resource Owner

- Update existing fact sheets and develop bioswale fact sheet (DM, RC)
- Review INPAWS Natives on Steep Slopes resource document (DM, RC)
- Develop permaculture guild plant list resource, permaculture demo site and hold guild sale (DM, SHS)
- Develop floodplain/riparian corridor recommended plant lists with Friends of the White River (DM, RC)
- Update Hoosier Heartland Rain Garden worksheet (DM, SHS)
- Assist homeowners with City Rain Garden/Native Planting Registration process (DM, RC, SHS)
- Identify permaculture demonstration site and CWI cost share program for permaculture (SHS)
- Develop and deliver quarterly Rule 5 activity report to City of Indianapolis (UC) and meet biannually with City per MOU (DM, UC and Board Chair)
- Identify grant funding opportunities for residential streambank erosion issues (DM, RC)

### Public Stakeholder

- Serve as local host agency for SICUM's Indiana Invasives Initiative (DM)
- Promote "carbon farming" aspect of soil health program for City's THRIVE initiative (SCS)
- Complete Green Infrastructure maintenance workforce development study for ROW (DM)
- Coordinate W4Land effort and soil health workshops with Bellfound Farm nonprofit's work (SCS)

### Marketing and Communication

- Apply for District Showcase award (DM)
- Quarterly newsletters and monthly blogs, update signatures with newsletter signup link (RC)
- Workshops and field days (SCS)
- Develop District infographic with services and stats (DM, RC, SCS, UC, Board)
- Create documentary on Indy Urban Acres with Channel 16 (DM, SCS)
- Target local philanthropic organizations for funding (CICF, NMPCT, Indianapolis Parks Foundation)

### Partnerships and Collaborations

- Foster relationships with Partners for the White River-ROW, Friends of White River, Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, Indiana Wildlife Federation (DM, SHS)
- Serve on Friends of the White River Board of Directors, White River Master Plan-Environment and Water Task Force and ROW Ecology/Fall Creek/Pogues Run Waterway Committees (DM)
- Explore internship opportunities with IUPUI and Butler Center for Urban Ecology (DM, RC, UC)
- Apply for 2019 CWI grant due 9/14/18 (DM, SHS, Board Education/Outreach Committee)
- Utilize existing Hoosier Heartland RC&D/W4Land partnership to increase access to additional funding

### Leadership Development

- Soil Health Train the Trainer Workshops with neighboring districts (SHS)
- Various ISDA led Supervisor Trainings (Board)
- Organize tour for board members/City Councillors of District programs (DM)

### Staff Development

- Conduct annual staff reviews (Board)
- Develop Operations/Procedures Manual (DM, Board Finance Committee)
- Develop Employee Policy Manual-vacation and rollover, health care, vehicle use, working with excluded cities etc (DM, HR/Staffing Committee)
- Develop District Manager Report template (DM, Board)

*This business plan was completed by the County SWCD Supervisors with the assistance of SWCD staff and supporting conservation agency partners on (insert date). It was updated (insert date).*