



St. Joseph
County
Soil & Water
Conservation
District



Today's Visions for Tomorrow's Future

September/October 2020
Volume 22, Issue 5

2903 Gary Drive, Ste 1, Plymouth, IN 46563
Website: stjosephswcd.org

Telephone (574) 936-2024
e-mail: info@stjosephswcd.org

New USDA Survey to Measure Areas for Improvement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announces a new annual survey of farmers, ranchers and private forestland owners. The survey will help USDA understand what it is doing well and where improvements are needed, specifically at the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

A selection of 28,000 producers will receive the survey over the next few weeks, but all farmers are encouraged to take the survey at www.farmers.gov/survey.

"We want to hear from our customers so we can learn what we're doing right and where we're missing the mark," Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Bill Northey said. "Good data is critical to good decision-making. The more responses we receive, the better we can understand what we need to do to improve our services to America's farmers, ranchers and private forestland owners."

This survey is part of the President's Management Agenda. It requires High Impact Service Provider agencies across the federal government, including FSA and NRCS, to conduct annual surveys to measure and respond to areas needing improvement.

"We recognize producers and our staff may be experiencing a lot of change in how they interact with USDA," Farm Service Agency Administrator Richard Fordyce said. "This is a good time to check in with our customers."

"We will use this input to help improve the delivery of our conservation programs as our sister agencies will do for their programs." Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Matthew Lohr said.

"We're about our customers," Risk Management Agency Administrator Martin Barbre said. "RMA works to provide producers with crop insurance policies that meet their needs and we need to know where we can improve."

The survey consists of 20 questions and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Responses are confidential, and individual responses will be aggregated. The survey will be open for at least six weeks and will be closed once USDA receives a 30% response rate.

Learn more and take the survey at www.farmers.gov/survey.

Question and Answers

Q1: Is this survey anonymous?

A1: For producers who received an invitation to complete the survey, the survey is confidential, but it is not anonymous. "Anonymous" means that we would not know who is receiving or responding to the survey. It is, however, confidential. We designed a representative sample of producers randomly selected from our 1.5 million producer mailing list (producers who have received funding over the past several years). We know who is receiving it as links are individualized but will not be tracking or reporting which specific people respond. CXD will protect the data through standard social science practices, and is pre-coding certain demographic information, such as the respondent geographical location. Respondents get questions that are tailored to them so aggregated analysis within agencies can be conducted.

Q2: How long will the survey be?

A2: The survey is 20 questions and will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Q3: What will the data be used for?

A3: This survey will gather baseline information on how we are doing and how we can improve or maintain high levels of service.

Q4: Will the results of the survey be shared with producers or the public?

A4: Summarized results will be shared on Farmers.gov once analysis and aggregation of all responses is completed.



USDA to Invest up to \$360 Million in Partner-Driven Conservation

Application period has opened for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) invites potential conservation partners to submit project applications for federal funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). NRCS will award up to \$360 million dollars to locally driven partnerships that improve the nation's water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat and protect agricultural viability.

"RCPP brings an expanded approach to investing in natural resource conservation that empowers local communities to work with multiple partners and agricultural producers to design solutions that work best for them," said Deborah Knepp St Joseph County NRCS District Conservationist.

Partners may request between \$250,000 and \$10 million in RCPP funding through this announcement. Partners are expected to offer value-added contributions to amplify the impact of RCPP funding in an amount equal or greater to the NRCS investment.

Eligible lead partners are encouraged to apply. Funding is open to private industry, non-government organizations, Indian tribes, state and local governments, water districts and universities, among others. The full list of eligible entities is available in the RCPP funding announcement.

First authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, RCPP has combined nearly \$1 billion in NRCS investments with close to \$2 billion in non-NRCS dollars to implement conservation practices across the nation. There are 336 active RCPP projects that have engaged more than 2,000 partners. Successful RCPP projects provide innovative conservation solutions, leverage partner contributions and offer impactful and measurable outcomes.

USDA is now accepting proposals for RCPP through the RCPP portal. Proposals are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on November 4, 2020. For more information, view the Application for Program Funding on grants.gov (www.bit.ly/RCPPapplication).

A webinar with general program information for RCPP applicants is scheduled for 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Aug 27, 2020. Visit the RCPP website for information on how to participate (www.bit.ly/USDARCPP).



Coming Together for Conservation: New Approach, More Partners
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

1 Regional Conservation Partnership Program is a new program that mobilizes partnerships to multiply investments and reach common conservation goals.

2 More Partners bring innovation, new ideas, resources and local expertise to solve problems.

Indian Tribes + Nonprofits + State and Local Governments + Private Industry + Water Districts + Universities

Priority Conservation Projects

3 RCPP Funding Options

- 40% National (multi-state projects)
- 25% State (state projects)
- 35% Critical Conservation Areas (areas designated by Secretary)

4 USDA plans to invest up to **\$1.2 billion**

USDA Goal: **Partners** match investment to equal — **\$2.4 billion** for conservation through 2018

more: nrcs.usda.gov/FarmBill



Op-Ed: Conservation Efforts Provide a Win-Win for Natural Resources and Pollinators

It's estimated that about three-fourths of the world's flowering plants and about 35 percent of the world's food crops depend on pollinators to reproduce. Some scientists estimate that one out of every three bites of food we eat exists because of pollinators like bees, butterflies and moths, birds and bats, and beetles and other insects.

Unfortunately, pollinators are faced with many challenges in today's modern world and we have seen a significant decline in these crucial species over the past several years. Habitat loss, disease, parasites, and environmental contaminants have all contributed to the decline of many species of pollinators.

One species in particular, the Monarch butterfly, has declined significantly over the past two decades, in part because of the decrease in native plants, including milkweed, on which their caterpillars feed. The orange-and-black butterfly is known for its annual, multi-generational migration from Mexico to as far north as Canada. Because monarch butterflies are always on the move, they need to have the right plants at the right time along their migration route. Monarch butterflies depend on milkweed to lay their eggs during the journey. Caterpillars need to feed on milkweed to complete their life cycle, and adult butterflies need the right nectar producing plants in bloom for needed energy.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is just one of many agencies encouraging change by investing dollars in a 10-state targeted conservation effort to give owners and managers of private lands the tools they need to create and enhance habitat for monarch butterflies. With assistance from NRCS, producers and conservation partners can increase critical populations of milkweed and nectar-rich plants by establishing them along field borders, in buffers along waterways or around wetlands, in pastures and other suitable locations. And we know when landowners improve habitat for monarchs, they are also providing food and habitat for other essential pollinators, reducing erosion, increasing soil health, and inhibiting the expansion of invasive species.

We want to thank Indiana's farm families for all you do to care for the land, improve the environment, and provide us safe and affordable food and fiber. We look forward to continuing to work together to provide better habitat for our pollinator friends.

You are invited to learn more about the Natural Resources Conservation Service, conservation practices and pollinators. Contact your District Conservationist, Deborah Knepp at 574-936-2024 Ext. 4 or visit the Indiana NRCS website, www.in.nrcs.usda.gov.



St Joseph and Marshall County SWCD in conjunction with a Clean Water Indiana Grant are offering cost share for **cover crops, no-till, nutrient management, filter strips and pollinator habitat**. Contact our office for an application.



St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership

With all the events and special programs being released to help with those affected by Covid-19, we sent out an e-mail blast in May with the information that was too late for the newsletter printing. Did you miss this information? Switch your subscription to digital and receive all the latest information at your fingertips and ensure you don't miss the latest news from the SWCD & NRCS.

FAQ

- We send 6 newsletters per year, 1 annual report, and 0-5 current programs/events emails per year.
- We will not sell or give your information to others without your consent.
- You can unsubscribe at anytime.

Are you ready to "GO GREEN"?

- ◆ Give us a call
- ◆ Send us an email and tell us you'd like to "Go Green"*
- ◆ Scan the QR code to "Go Green"*

*Make sure to tell us your mailing address so we can take you off the snail mail list.



SWCD Supervisors:

John Dooms, Chair
Jeremy Cooper, Vice Chair
Dave Craft
Mike Burkholder
Dave Vandewalle

SWCD Associate Supervisors:

Jim LaFree
Chuck Lehman
Randy Matthys
Richard Schmidt
Dave Straughn
Dru Wrasse

SWCD Honorary Members:

Jerry Knepp
Keith Lineback
William Millar

St. Joseph County Soil & Water Conservation Partnership Staff:

Sam Buchanan, SWCD
Sandra Hoffarth, SWCD
Sarah Longenecker, SWCD
Debbie Knepp, NRCS

Farm Service Agency Staff:

Gideon Nobbe, CED
Devan Herrell
Katie Leitch
Aldona Martin
Tara Wolfe