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2024 Annual Report

65 years Conservation in St. Joseph County

The St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District was formed in 1959 during a nationwide movement to bring awareness to the need for utilizing conservation agricultural practices to protect our natural resources. In the beginning, the District consisted of the Board of Supervisors who worked alongside the Soil Conservation Service at the local level to provide technical assistance to farmers to plan and apply the conservation practices. Over the past 65 years we have seen significant changes - weather, farms, lifestyles. As the needs of the county have changed, so has the District. But looking through Annual Reports from the past 65 years, one thing remains consistent – protecting our natural resources for future generations.

The mission of the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District is to help county residents improve their natural resources. Soil and water are critical resources for all life. Our vision is to continue to play a vital role in conservation efforts in St. Joseph County, from helping urban and rural farmers implement conservation practices on their cropland, to encouraging youth to be conservation minded, to educating landowners about utilizing native species and eliminating invasive species. Each of us has an impact on soil and water conservation, and the District works to create programs and workshops to reach St. Joseph County residents of all ages and backgrounds. We work collaboratively with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other partners, and community members to provide assistance and help residents to understand their role in soil and water conservation.

Conservation looks a little different to each one of us, but we all have the same goal. To be stewards of the land. To improve our soil health and water quality. To adapt to changes and continue to protect our natural resources for future generations.

When the land does well for its owner, and the owner does well for its land - when both end up better by reason of their partnership - then we have conservation.

Aldo Leopold



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

**Today's Visions
for Tomorrow's Future**

www.StJosephSWCD.org

2903 Gary Drive
Plymouth, IN 46563

(574) 936-2024 Ext. 4
info@stjosephswcd.org

Our Mission

To help St. Joseph County Residents improve their natural resources through conservation and education.



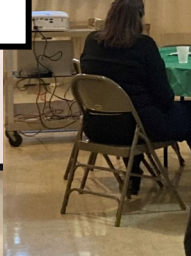
64th Annual Meeting



Soil Health Summit



Producers Workshop



Ag Days



Growing Summit



School Field Trips and Programs



Unity Gardens Earth Day



Natural Resources Day at the Fair



Nature Journals with St. Mary's Students



Stantec Open House

Hoosier Riverwatch

2024 Education and Outreach

Healthy soil and clean water are essential to every resident of St. Joseph County. As a leader in soil and water conservation efforts, the St. Joseph County Soil and Water Conservation District recognizes the diversity in residents throughout the county and strives to create programs and initiatives to reach as many as possible. These are a few of our 2024 successful additions.



What's Going On Under The Covers?

Have you ever wondered why some crop fields are green in the winter? To encourage people to think about this, we placed signs near some of these fields that read "What's Going On Under The Covers? www.StJosephSWCD.org". Visitors to our website find a link to a page that teaches about why cover crops and other conservation practices are important and about things we can all do to protect our soil and water.



Meet Your Farmer Gathering

Not only do we want everyone to learn about conservation agriculture, but we want them to meet St. Joseph County farmers who are doing the work! Our associate supervisor and long-time conservation farmer, Scott Ladig, and his wife Sheila, opened their doors in June, and together we hosted a dinner and presentation. Partners, legislators, and community members joined us to learn about soil health from our county conservationist and to hear about Scott's farming journey.



Native Plant Kits for Schools



Native plants have a great impact on our soil health and water quality. To provide students with a hands-on project to learn about the benefits, we offered teachers native plant kits. We assembled the kits with cups, soil, seeds, grow lights, and bins - enough supplies for each student to grow their own black-eyed Susans. We provided materials to the teachers to instruct the students through the beginning growing process, then followed with a presentation on native plants by our environmental educator. One teacher was even able to plant them at the school!



The success of these programs has encouraged us to continue these into 2025, as well as add new community programs. Watch our newsletters and website for updates!

And join us at our 65th Annual Meeting on February 7th to learn more about our 2024 accomplishments! Contact the office for more information.

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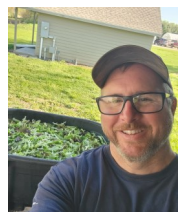
Marty Lappin,
Vice-Chairman
3 Years of Service



Dave Vandewalle
Supervisor
15 Years of Service



Joe Gregory
Supervisor
2 Year of Service



Ryan Lee
Supervisor
1 Year of Service

Associate Supervisors

- John Doms - 42 Years
- Chuck Lehman - 43 Years
- Richard Schmidt - 38 Years
- Randy Matthys - 36 Years
- Dave Craft - 22 Years
- Dru Wrasse - 16 Years
- Mike Borkholder - 11 Years
- Dave Straughn - 6 Years
- Scott Laidig

Honorary Board Members

Keith Lineback

A big heartfelt thank you to all of our Supervisors & Associate Supervisors, as well as our partnership staff. Without all of you we would not be able to accomplish all that we have this year and in the years to come!

St. Joseph County Soil And Water Conservation Partnership



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SWCD/NRCS Partnership Staff



Sarah Longenecker
SWCD County Conservationist
11 Years of Service



Debbie Knepp
USDA NRCS District Conservationist
41 Years of Service



Misty Sorchevich
SWCD Administrative Assistant
2 Years of Service



Shelley Chaffee
SWCD Environmental Education Coordinator
1 Year of Service



Riley Porter
Pheasants Forever Biologist
1 Year of Service

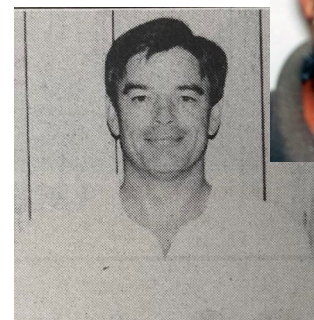


Andrea Baker
NRCS Soil Conservationist
4 Years of Service

In Memory of William Millar

March 24, 1944 - May 25, 2024

In May we lost Honorary Board Member, Bill Millar. Bill was a lifelong farmer in Liberty Township, producing corn and hogs. He became a St. Joseph County SWCD board member in 1971, and over his years on the board served as both chairman and vice-chairman. He was instrumental in developing our conservation tillage program. We thank Bill for his commitment to agriculture in St. Joseph County, and send our deepest sympathy to his family.



Purdue Extension Service (USDA)

County Extension Director: Brittini Gendron

4-H/Youth Development Educator:

Emma Rouch

Ag & Natural Resources Educator: Emily Evers

Admin Assistant, 4-H Youth: Julyenne Freeland

Office Manager, Ag & NR: Karla Valenzuela

Farm Service Agency (USDA)

County Executive Director: Gideon Nobbe

Program Technicians:

Devan Harrell

Aldona Martin

Diane Stichter

Michael Cuff

Thank you!

Thank you to these 2025 Members for their generous donations! Donor members help ensure we are able to continue offering free technical assistance to St. Joseph County landowners and quality educational programs for residents of all ages.

Silver Level

Joe & Dorene Graff

Chuck & Susan Lehman

Bronze Level

Rick & Beth Stoner - Stoner's Farms

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Karen Wiesjahn
Jeff Peterson
Peter Holmgren
Randy & Cindi Stoner
Marcia Kern
Dave Croft



2024 River-Friendly Farmer
Darrell & Andrea Gill, Lakeville

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Why Are Conservation

Here are many of the conservation practices installed in St. Joseph County during the 2024 fiscal year, and why they are beneficial!

Crop Production

216 Acres of Cover Crops

- ◆ Reduce erosion from wind and water.
- ◆ Maintain or increase soil health and organic matter content.
- ◆ Reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excessive soil nutrients.
- ◆ Suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles.
- ◆ Improve soil moisture use efficiency.
- ◆ Minimize soil compaction.
- ◆ Provide food and escape cover for wildlife.

252 Acres of No-Till/Reduced Till

- ◆ Reduce sheet, rill and wind erosion.
- ◆ Maintain or increase soil health and organic matter content.
- ◆ Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- ◆ Reduce energy use.
- ◆ Increase plant available moisture.
- ◆ Provide food and escape cover for wildlife.

3 Acres Field Borders

- ◆ Reduce erosion from wind and water and reduce excessive sediment to surface waters.
- ◆ Reduce sedimentation offsite and protect water quality and nutrients in surface and ground waters.
- ◆ Provide food and cover for wildlife and pollinators or other beneficial organisms.
- ◆ Reduce greenhouse gases and increase carbon storage.
- ◆ Reduce emissions of particulate matter.

1,584 Acres Pest Management

- ◆ Reduce plant pest pressure.
- ◆ Reduce injury to beneficial organisms.
- ◆ Reduce transport of pesticides to surface and ground water.
- ◆ Reduce emissions of particulate matter (PM) and PM precursors.
- ◆ Reduce emissions of ozone precursors.

178 Acres Nutrient Management

- ◆ Improve plant health and productivity.
- ◆ Reduce excess nutrients in surface and ground water.
- ◆ Reduce emissions of objectionable odors.
- ◆ Reduce emissions of particulate matter (PM) and PM precursors.
- ◆ Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG).
- ◆ Reduce emissions of ozone precursors.
- ◆ Reduce the risk of potential pathogens from reaching surface and ground water.
- ◆ Improve or maintain soil organic matter



Livestock

46.7 Acres Forage and Biomass Planting

- ◆ Reduce soil erosion.
- ◆ Improve soil and water quality.
- ◆ Improve and maintain livestock health.
- ◆ Provide or increase forage supply during periods of low forage production.
- ◆ Produce feedstock for biofuel or energy production.

215 Acres Pasture and Hay Planting

- ◆ Improve or maintain livestock nutrition and health
- ◆ Provide or increase forage supply during periods of low forage production
- ◆ Reduce soil erosion
- ◆ Improve water quality and soil health.



Urban & Small Farms

5,370 Square Feet of Seasonal High Tunnels and 4,500 Square Feet of Low Tunnel Systems

- ◆ Improve plant health and vigor.
- ◆ Extend growing season.



Wetlands

Wetland Restoration and Enhancement

- ◆ Increases the capacity of specific wetland functions by enhancing hydric soil functions, hydrology and vegetation.
- ◆ Enhances plant and animal habitats.

2,707 Acres Planned 1,539 Acres Applied in 2024



57754 Crumstown Hwy
South Bend, IN 46619
Phone (574) 287-1935

Practices Important?

All of the statistics below are *new* installations in St. Joseph County for 2024.

Forestry

119 Acres of Brush Management Invasive Species Control

- ◆ Restore or release desired cover to protect soils, control erosion, reduce sediment, improve water quality, or enhance hydrology.
- ◆ Maintain or enhance fish and wildlife habitat.
- ◆ Control pervasive plant species to a desired level of treatment.
- ◆ Create the desired plant community consistent with the ecology of the site.

7 Acres of Tree and Shrub Establishment

- ◆ Provide forest products.
- ◆ Provide wildlife habitat; Improve and restore natural diversity.
- ◆ Provide long-term erosion control and improvement of water quality.
- ◆ Store carbon in biomass.
- ◆ Improve and restore natural diversity.

19 Acres of Forest Stand Improvement and 48 Acres Crop Tree Management

- ◆ Improve and sustain forest health and production.
- ◆ Reduce damage from pests and moisture stress.
- ◆ Initiate forest stand regeneration.
- ◆ Restore and maintain natural plant communities.
- ◆ Improve wildlife and pollinator habitat.



3 Acres Herbaceous Weed Treatment

- ◆ Enhance accessibility, quantity, quality of forage and/or browse.
- ◆ Restore or release native or desired plant communities for wildlife habitat.
- ◆ Protect soils and control erosion.
- ◆ Reduce fine fuel loads and wildfire hazard.
- ◆ Control pervasive plant species to a desired level of treatment.



Wildlife Habitat

22 Acres of Conservation Cover (pollinator/monarch habitat)

- ◆ Native Grasses and Forbs.
- ◆ Reduce sheet, rill, and wind erosion and sedimentation.
- ◆ Reduce ground and surface water quality degradation by nutrients and surface water quality degradation by sediment.
- ◆ Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.
- ◆ Improve soil health.
- ◆ Enhance wildlife, pollinator and beneficial organism habitat.

St. Joseph County farmers and landowners received \$643,572 through federal programs in 2024.

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Invasive Species Management



With continued interest and concern around invasive plants, 2024 was a busy year for our invasive species working group, **SMIPP, St. Joseph-Marshall Counties Invasive Plant Partnership**. We provided information at outreach events like Wild Ones' Plant Sale, and this year's Weed Wrangles® were very well attended.

We are also excited about the new programs we have been able to develop this year. In the spring we did a callout for Strike Teams, which are groups of trained volunteers who do intensive removal of the invasives in a particular area. Not only were we able to do some Strike Teams removals, but this also led to the development of Weed Warriors. These are teams of volunteers who meet on a regular basis at their chosen park. We are excited about the momentum and are looking forward to continuing with more in the new year! Many thanks to our amazing volunteers!

If you're interested in joining in the invasive removal fun, contact the office to find out how!



When Is It Considered Invasive?

Invasive plants are non-native plants that are likely to cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human health.

These plants have been introduced to the US over the years in various ways, often as landscape plants that spread into our natural areas, or as hitchhikers in global trade. While over the years many species have been introduced, only the most aggressive are considered invasive. These are plants that are causing major problems in the areas they inhabit as they have no natural predators and can easily adapt to their surroundings. They are taking over natural areas, destroying the habitat of native plants, and using up the resources. The spread of invasives also changes the habitat for our wildlife and pollinators who have evolved alongside the native plants and depend upon them.

Economically speaking, invasive species cost the world billions of dollars every year. They are contributing to plant and animal extinctions, and contribute to food insecurities. Even on a local level the impacts are a problem. Roundleaf (Oriental) bittersweet can take down whole trees, and spotted lanternfly is a threat to some crops.

Each of us can play a role to slow the spread of invasive species. Learn what plants you should avoid planting and remove from your landscape. Find out what signs to look for when it comes to insects like the spotted lanternfly. And join SMIPP at events like Weed Wrangles® to learn more about invasive plants in our region.

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Charlotte Wolfe, Director 574-344-1753

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Urban Agriculture



Across the country, there has been a significant increase in the number of small and urban farms, spurred on in part because of the surging interest in local foods and the increasing desire for better access to healthy foods. While every farm comes with its own challenges, urban and small farms tend to have more unique issues than more traditional, large-scale farms. This is why we helped form the local working group, **SCRAP (St. Joseph County Regenerative Ag Partnership)** in 2023. This groups consists of farmers of all experience levels, plus staff from the Indiana Conservation Partnership, providing education and support.



In 2024, SCRAP hosted a Soil Health Summit and a Small Farm Tour, along with multiple educational seminars. We have also been able to visit farms, offering soil testing and technical assistance. And 2025 is looking even better! We are starting the year with a farmer networking event in January and already have locations for our first farm tour of the year, as well as working out the topics for our next Soil Health Summit. For more information, or to get involved with this growing group, reach out!



Dirty Truth of Soil: Not Just for Playing In (*But Also That*)

By Terri Theisen - Soil Health Specialist NE Region, Urban Soil Health Program

How often do you find yourself thinking about soil? Admittedly, I think about soil more than most. Sometimes, I imagine soil as a wise elder who’s seen it all or the jaded one proclaiming loudly: “Get off my lawn!” Even with all my time personifying soil, the time spent ruminating about the earth’s crust is an act of love. It is love for a thriving ecosystem we often overlook as we walk all over it.

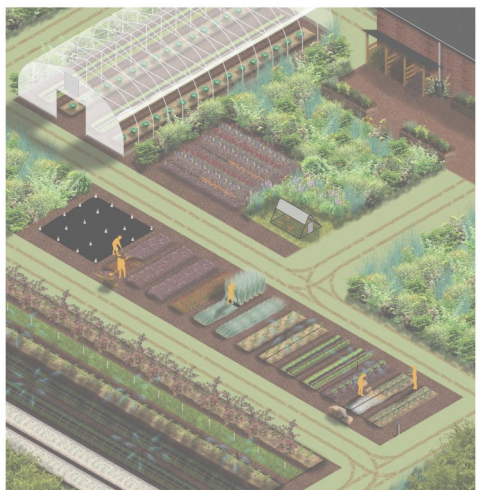
To be clear, *dirt* is the gunk that gets stuck under our nails and hides under the refrigerator (note to self: clean under the fridge). But **SOIL** is more than dirt - it’s alive and *thriving* and can make all the difference for a small farm.

For anyone who can remember from their earth science classes, most soils are made of 25% water, 25% air, 45% minerals, and 5% organic matter. Let me tell you a little secret about soil health: it’s all about the life! That 5% fuels an underground party. There are microscopic powerhouses (bacteria, fungi, protozoa, nematodes) and macroscopic critters (earthworms, beetles, spiders) working overtime to keep our soil ecosystem chugging along.

You may ask yourself, "What's in it for me?" As a small-scale grower, good soil health can make or break the business. Focusing on the four soil health principles—minimizing soil disturbance, maximizing soil cover, maximizing biodiversity, and maintaining continuous living roots—and the practices that support them will have you well on your way to better crops, fewer weeds, and less stress for plants and the farmer!

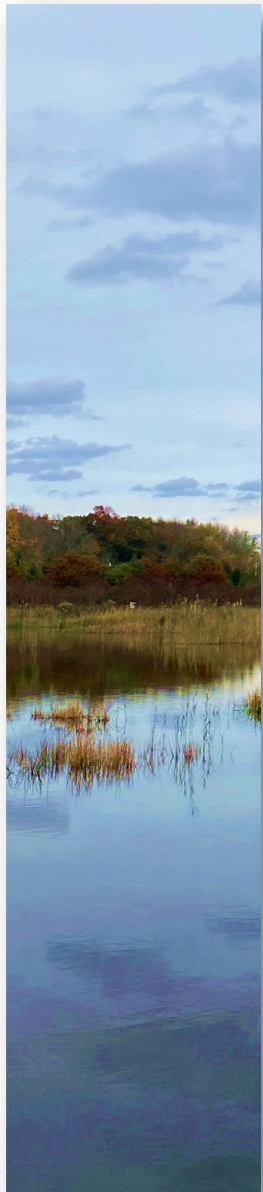


Small changes can do wonders on your journey to soil health, like adding organic matter or rotating crops. Soil doesn't ask for much; it just needs a little TLC and maybe a cover crop now and again. If you are looking for more inspiration, Urban Soil Health introduced a new resource: Top 10 Small Farm Conservation Practices. It outlines (you guessed it) the top 10 practices with a lot of bang for their buck when implemented. You can find it on our website under the resources tab: urbansoilhealth.org/resources.



Sometimes, when I get invited to parties, I am the only one talking about soil and plants and conservation. Can anyone else relate? Alas, there is no need to be lonely! Soil health brings people together - workshops, community projects, and farmer meet-ups. Sharing knowledge and resources, advocating for better practices, and leaning on local conservation groups are all part of the journey. All these things are happening in your community and are supported by your St Joseph County SWCD. Find your fellow conservation nerds throughout the year! Your local SWCD isn't just full of acronyms - they're full of help.

What's the gist of it all? What can you do today for better soil health? Keep learning! Teach others! Start those projects you've been meaning to get around to, like that compost pile. And keep talking about our soil! It takes a few centuries to create a centimeter of topsoil. What's a few minutes talking to your neighbor to save it? At the end of the day, soil health isn't just for your farm—it's for your whole community. Plus, playing in the dirt is still pretty fun, too.



Partners for Fish & Wildlife U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The Partners for Fish & Wildlife (PFW) program offers technical and financial assistance to private landowners interested in restoring, managing, or enhancing high-quality wildlife habitat. Whether you live in the Kankakee or St. Joseph watershed, the PFW program has cost-share funding available for habitat restoration through partnerships with Ducks Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Pollinator Partnership, and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Project habitat types include wetland restorations, native prairie and grassland plantings, reforestation, and educational/outreach projects. By working together, biologists can help landowners realize their vision for their property while providing valuable wildlife habitat in Indiana.



Jared O'Brien
Private Lands Biologist
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
(812) 272-3164
jared_obrien@fws.gov

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Indiana Private Lands Office has biologists stationed throughout Indiana. Jared O'Brien is the private lands biologist based out of the Kankakee Fish & Wildlife Area and covers eighteen counties in northwest Indiana, including St. Joseph. Are you interested in improving habitat on your own property? Contact your local Partners for Fish and Wildlife Biologist to learn more!

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever

By Riley Porter, Northwest Wildlife Biologist

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever (PFQF) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1982 by pheasant hunters who noticed the relationship between declining pheasant numbers and habitat loss. The organization dedicated themselves to wildlife habitat conservation, which quickly gave them the reputation as "The Habitat Organization." The mission of PFQF is to conserve pheasants, quail, and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public access, education, and conservation advocacy. Today, the organization has over 130,000 members in more than 750 local chapters around the country and employs more than 175 wildlife biologists. PFQF works hand in hand with many nongovernmental, governmental, nonprofit, and corporate partners to accomplish their mission.



Within the state of Indiana, PFQF employs seven wildlife biologists, one precision agriculture conservation specialist, one state coordinator, and one regional representative. We are in close partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), as well as the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Together, we work to conserve early successional habitat for the benefit of many wildlife species within the state of Indiana. These habitats include both native tall and short grass prairies, pollinator and wildflower establishments, and even tree plantings. A large part of restoring habitat is working with private landowners who would like to improve their property by converting previous agricultural fields, or privately owned land, to wildlife friendly habitats. Our job as biologists is to write management plans for the landowner and assist them in establishing wildlife habitat. These establishments both increases the utility of their land and provides space for wildlife use. Through our partnership with the NRCS, there are often programs available to the landowners to help share the costs of putting habitat on the ground.

As biologists, we try to envision all the resources that are necessary for wildlife to survive on the landscape. When developing a habitat, it is important to consider the food that will be needed, the cover required, and the space available to any wildlife species. A great habitat has an abundance of native grasses, forbs, and legumes. This mosaic provides most of the resources needed for maximizing the fitness of any wildlife species. Aside from benefiting wildlife, these habitats are also important for preventing runoff and erosion from agriculture fields. This can directly help the landowners save time and money while still maximizing their property's use.

Pheasants Forever has chapters that are found in local communities all over the country, and the state of Indiana. Chapter members often volunteer their time to installing wildlife habitats in their community, raise money for conservation efforts, and educate the next generation in outdoor conservation. Chapter members are a critical part to PFQF's vision of having "current and future generations of hunters and conservationists being able to enjoy abundant populations of wild pheasants, quail, and other wildlife."

If anyone is interested in improving wildlife habitat on their own property, or are interested in joining their local PFQF chapter, please feel free to contact your local wildlife biologist: Riley Porter, Northwest Wildlife Biologist: rporter@pheasantsforever.org ; (843) 271-9527

A Local Farmer's Journey

By Caitlin Spencer, Spencer Family Farms

I started my journey into farming in the spring of 2022 with four rows and a big dream. I was looking for something that could accommodate my schedule once my son had entered school and fulfill my dreams of working at home while utilizing my family's land. Most aspects of the job came naturally to me, and when it didn't I worked hard on soaking in every ounce of floriculture that was available. I spent the first season selling at our roadside stand and took on the occasional custom order.

In the fall of 2022, I enrolled in the Marshall County Master Gardeners program and completed the class that winter. Not only did I learn so much through the class and from the educator answering my millions of questions after class, but I also met an amazing group of people who were also just as passionate about growing. That winter I was also introduced to the NRCS EQIP program for high tunnels and really started to get interested in cool season flowers and season extension.

In the spring of 2023, I was overly ambitious and went from four rows to eighteen. It was a huge amount of additional work, and it was all hands on deck at the Spencer household! We got a notice in April that



our application was chosen for funding and that fall we were able to install a 30' x 96' high tunnel. I overwintered every single crop possible to see what would work well for us, and what we did not love. By the spring of 2024, I could not believe what we were able to pull off with the high tunnel! We started getting flowers in April and were overflowing with them by May. This gave us an additional two to three months of income and allowed us to partake in Mother's Day sales. I was fascinated by the quality of the flowers inside the tunnel as compared to my field grown, and I immediately knew the immense benefit of having a high tunnel in northern Indiana. We continued to grow our customer base at our roadside stand, continued with the Mishawaka Farmers Market, joined the Bremen Farmers Market, added private u-picks and field trips, and had significantly increased our custom event work. We went from eighteen to twenty-two rows and added our first low tunnel at the end of fall 2024. Our spring crop is planted and will be in full swing in 2025. I will forever be grateful for the crew that helped us apply for our high tunnel grant as it opened up so much potential for our

farm and introduced me to my love of cool season flowers. I have met some incredible people through my journey in agriculture and cannot wait to see what the next few years has in store for our farm.



Blossoming Prosperity

Empowering Indiana's Cut Flower Growers for Sustainable Growth

By Emily Evers, Emily Kresca, and Reba Wicker

A team of Purdue Extension Educators are working to provide more research and education to cut flower growers as we have seen an increase in production with limited resources to support their efforts. "Blossoming Prosperity: Empowering Indiana Cut Flower Growers for Sustainable Growth" is a comprehensive program aimed at equipping both new and experienced growers with essential risk management skills.

The initiative kicks off with Annie's Project for Cut Flower Growers, a strategic introduction to the five key areas of risk that every farmer faces. This program combines virtual and in-person learning to create a flexible and accessible experience for participants. Focus areas include new business development, financial management, strategic marketing, competitive production practices, and liability management—all crucial for fostering sustainable growth in the industry.

To enhance the educational experience, the program will also feature regional meetings that delve into cut flower production and marketing. These gatherings are designed to improve yield and profitability, offering practical insights tailored to the needs of Indiana growers. The final element of the initiative consists of on-farm tours at three successful cut flower operations across the state. These tours will provide participants with hands-on learning opportunities, allowing them to see effective risk management strategies in action.

The anticipated impact of this program is significant, with over 50 growers expected to participate. Six months post-completion, at least 25 of these growers are projected to successfully implement new risk management skills, enhance their production practices, and improve the viability and marketing of their businesses. Through "Blossoming Prosperity," Indiana's cut flower growers are poised to thrive, armed with the knowledge and skills necessary for sustainable success in an increasingly competitive market.

Funding for this project was provided by the North Central Extension Risk Management Education Center, the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture under Award Number 2023-70027-40444.

If you are interested in learning more about the program, please contact Emily Evers at everse@purdue.edu or 574-235-9605.



**Purdue Extension
St. Joseph County**

65 Years of Conservation!



1980s Clipart AW-33

From the 1963 Annual Report Planning the Future

We feel that every farmer in the county should have a soil and water conservation plan and use his soil according to its capabilities and without waste to future generations. We will continue with the projects and activities that have been successful in the past and will be looking forward to other projects that will further soil and water conservation practices for the future.

We expect great things from the Soil Conservation District organization and are proud of the part which we, as Supervisors, have played in its organization and its activities in the past. We are sure that through soil and water conservation efforts we can improve the economy and social conditions of the District and maintain a progressive, industrial, agricultural, retail and cultural growth.



Larry Clemens, Educator 1980s



1975 Annual Meeting



1964 John Moore, SCS, Robert Werman

From the 1994 Annual Report Education is the Key

Back when the District was formed in 1959, the world was a little different. When the District thought of education, the direction was towards the producer. Field days were designed to show that farming could be done differently from generation to generation. Field days demonstrated how these new conservation practices could maintain yield, increase productivity and conserve our nation's lifeblood, the soil.

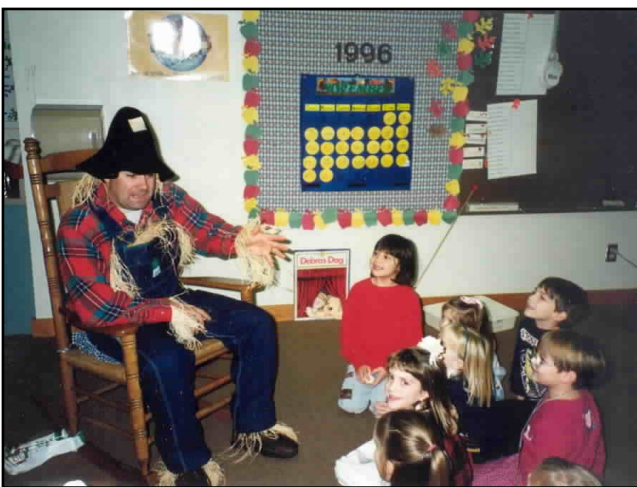
But things began to change. The people of our country, like the rest of our nation, were moving away from the land. Thus, an entire generation of youth appeared who did not have the opportunity to learn about nature. The District saw this trend and in 1984, hired an Environmental Education Coordinator (EEC), to work with not only adults but the youth of our county.

Actually, adult education was the starting point of the EEC. An environmental education curriculum was developed by 1986. The EEC then began to provide programs for the classroom. In this manner the teacher could see the amazing response by students to environmental education.

Another way to help bring the word of conservation into the schools is by designing Outdoor Environmental Education Laboratories on the school property. Whether the school only has a courtyard or 20 acres, the area can be improved to increase the natural learning experience, without going on a field trip.

Today environmental education is alive and growing in our schools. In 1994 the District provided over 600 programs for over 20,000 students and helped establish 4 new labs.

The District's vision is helping to bring the Natural World, an understanding of its importance to our county's youth.



1996 Rick Glassman



2007 Legislator Field Tour Joe Donnelly, IN Senator & John Doms, Chairman of the SWCD Board