

Hendricks Communicator



Soil and Water
Conservation
District



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Annual Report 2003

Annual Report Edition

Hendricks County Soil and Water Conservation District's 52nd Annual Meeting

will be Tuesday, *JANUARY 20th*, 6:30 PM at the Hendricks 4-H Community Building, Danville.

The purpose of the meeting is to report to the citizens of Hendricks County the activities of the District for the past year. During the business meeting Conservation award winners will be honored and one supervisor will be elected to direct the District's activities for the next three years.

Jeff Kingdon, Natural Resource Conservationist with the District, will be the annual meeting speaker. He will be speaking on his recent bicycle trip along the Lewis and Clark trail. A snow date has been set, Tuesday, February 3, 2004. The meeting will begin with a dinner served by Red Dog Catering.

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Mission Statement

To help the citizens of Hendricks County manage, conserve and enhance natural resources today for the benefit of tomorrow's generations through education, public information, leadership, technical assistance and development of innovative programs.

FARM BILL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 - the 2002 Farm Bill - contains unprecedented support for environmental stewardship and conservation of working lands, ensuring the land remains both healthy and productive. The Hendricks County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) want to remind farmers that these programs offer a great opportunity to voluntarily address conservation and environmental problems around the farm.

"This Farm Bill represents an excellent opportunity for farmers to show that an incentive-based, Voluntary approach to conservation can keep private land in production while benefiting the environment at the same time," said Jim Loughmiller, Hendricks County SWCD chairman. He noted that active participation in these programs would help the American farmer address many of the public environmental concerns associated with producing crops and livestock while improving their bottom line.

Conservation districts across the nation are also reminding producers that many conservation practices can help optimize farming operation profits by reducing costs of production, such as labor, fuel and machinery costs.

One of the most significant components of the farm bill conservation title is the new nationwide Conservation Security Program (CSP), which provides incentive, cost share and bonus payments to producers to maintain existing conservation practices or install new ones. The CSP, which was authorized for all producers and all agricultural lands, will compensate producers for the environmental benefits they provide to the American public.

Since CSP benefits are available to all farmers of any size and on all agricultural lands, many more producers are expected to enroll and put into effect sound conservation measures.

To learn more about current farm bill conservation programs, contact Henry Wallis, District Conservationist, at the Hendricks County Soil & Water Conservation office (317) 745-2555.

The conservation programs addressed by the new Farm Bill include:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Farm Bill reauthorizes the Environmental Quality Incentives Program through 2007. It adds \$4.6 billion to the program. The EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to eligible producers to address soil, water and related natural resource concerns. It offers cost-share payments, for implementing eligible conservation practices and incentive payments for implementing land management practices.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

The Wetlands Reserve Program is USDA's premier wetland restoration program. It offers landowners an opportunity to obtain financial and technical assistance for restoring and protecting wetlands on their property. The Farm Bill increases overall acreage caps for the WRP from 975,000 to 2.275 million acres. The WRP is offered on a continuous sign-up basis. Applications are available at local USDA service centers, NRCS field offices and conservation districts or on the Web at <http://www.scegov.usda.gov>

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The Farm Bill reauthorizes the highly successful Conservation Reserve Program. The CRP provides technical and financial assistance to reduce soil erosion, protect the nation's ability to produce food and fiber, reduce sedimentation in streams and lakes, improve water quality, establish wildlife habitat and enhance forest and wetland resources. CRP encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover. The Farm Bill increases overall acreage caps for the CRP from 36.4 to 39.2 million acres.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is part of the CRP. It is a voluntary program designed to address specific grass roots environmental issues related to agriculture. The CREP combines the CRP with state programs to allow USDA to work in partnership with state government and local interests. Because the Farm Bill increases acreage caps for CRP, it will provide more opportunities to create partnership agreements through the CREP. More information on the CRP and the CREP can be found at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/default.htm>.

Conservation Security Program (CSP)

The Farm Bill creates a new Conservation Security Program to financially recognize ongoing stewardship efforts and to help producers address additional resource concerns on agricultural working lands. The Farm Bill establishes the program for fiscal years 2003 through 2007.

Farmland Protection Program (FPP)

The Farmland Protection Program helps protect prime farmland from conservation to nonagricultural uses. The Farm Bill reauthorizes this program and extends it to nongovernmental organizations, as well as, states, tribes and local governments, to purchase conservation easements. It also expands the program to protect farms and ranches that contain historical and archaeological sites.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

The Farm Bill reauthorizes the popular Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program to improve fish and wildlife habitat on private lands. Through WHIP, landowners can receive financial and technical assistance to help reverse the decline of available wildlife habitat and contribute to the recovery of many of the nation's species that currently are at risk. WHIP is offered on a continuous sign-up basis. Applications are available at local USDA service centers, NRCS field offices and conservation districts or on the Web at <http://www.w.sc.gov.usda.gov>.

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

The Farm Bill permanently reauthorizes the Resource Conservation and Development Program. The RC&D Program provides tools and technical support that helps local people improve their quality of life, address social, economic and environmental concerns and use natural resources wisely. The focus on local direction and control has made RC&D one of the most successful rural development programs of the Federal Government.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

The Farm Bill establishes a new Grasslands Reserve Program, authorizing enrollment of up to two million acres of restored, improved, or natural grassland, rangeland and pasture land, including prairie.

CLEAN WATER INDIANA PROGRAMS

Land within the Big Walnut Creek watershed is eligible for participation in the Quail Unlimited Conservation Buffer Project. Through a grant from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), landowners are offered financial and technical assistance to establish field borders, larger areas of warm season grasses, and other conservation buffer practices. Areas are planted at no cost to landowners by Quail Unlimited. In the case of qualifying **Field Borders**, an incentive payment is available from the Hendricks County Soil and Water Conservation District using Clean Water Indiana Funds. Partners for this project include: West Central Chapter Quail Unlimited, Sycamore Trails RC&D and Putnam and Hendricks County SWCDs.

Hendricks County SWCD is also sponsoring a **Stream Buffer Filter Strip initiative** for areas not enrolled in the USDA Conservation Reserve Program. This program is applicable countywide. Limited incentive payments are available through our Clean Water Indiana program to address odd areas in fields, small tracts and non-agricultural disturbed lands.

For assistance with these programs contact Jeff Kingdon at the District office at 745-2555 ext. 3 or email jeff-kingdon@iaswcd.org



Clean Water Indiana
Conserving and Enhancing Our Land, Lakes, and Rivers

Environmental Education Workshop for Educators

An Environmental Education Workshop for teachers and youth leaders will be held at Gallahue Girl Scout Camp in the hills of Brown County on Wednesday, April 23 and Thursday, April 24, 2003, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The cost is \$35.00 per person for one day early registration (late registration one day is \$45.00) or \$55.00 per person for the 2-day (late registration two days is \$65) which includes lunch and two snacks, plus handout materials. Late registration is postmarked after March 21st. Class sizes are limited. **Registration deadline is April 11, 2003.**

This environmental workshop targets field studies involving hands-on activities and the latest supplementary curriculum materials in education matching Indiana's DOE science and math standards for formal and non-formal educators who are interested in providing natural resources education to the audiences. Some topics that will be included in this year's workshop are IDNR programs—Go FishIN and Project WILD, plant identification, soils, nature photography, how to use an existing outdoor classroom, and bats of Indiana to name just a few.

The workshop is sponsored by the Hoosier Heartland Resource Conservation and Development Council Education Committee, and the Hoosier Capital Girl Scout Council. For registration information contact the Hoosier Heartland RC&D office at 5995 Lakeside Boulevard, Suite B, Indianapolis, IN 46278-1996, call (317) 290-3250, email hhrdc@cd.org or your local soil and water conservation district. **Registration information is also available on our web site at www.hhrdc.org.**

Continous CRP continues ...

However ... 50% + 40% cost share program for eligible conservation practices!

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) which includes a buffer Initiative has three practices that are important and cost-effective:

Grass Waterways - Grass Buffer Strips - Riparian Buffer Strips

In addition, the annual rental payment per acre based upon the soil type plus a five dollar per year maintenance allowance will be included. Also, during this time period there is a one time \$10 per acre times the CRP length (10 or 15 year) incentive payment, which could amount to: \$100 or \$150 per acre.

Aside from the benefits of these practices to water quality by vegetating these highly erosive areas, increased farmability, increased profits, and annual payments make this a great opportunity.

The additional incentive payments include:

- 40% cost-share
- one time \$10 per acre times the length of contract

If the conservation practices are not completed by the end of *September 2003*, **then the above additional incentive payments may not continue.** However, the 50% cost-share, soil rental payment, and maintenance allowance will still apply.

Besides this coming *spring or fall for installation of the conservation practices*, it may be necessary to *construct the conservation practices this summer to meet the deadline.*

Upcoming Events

- Jan. 28 Hendricks County SWCD Annual Meeting - 6:30 pm
- Feb. 11 Ag. Contractors Workshop (CRP) - Hendricks Community Bldg. - 7:30 am
- Feb. 14 Urban Planning Guide - Hendricks County Government Center - 9:00 am
- Feb. 18 Pesticide Applicators Certification - Hendricks County Community Bldg. - 10:00 am
- April 23/24 Camp Gallahue Environmental Education Workshop

**ATTENTION FIRE DEPARTMENTS!
HOOSIER HEARTLAND RC&D HAS
RECEIVED AN EXTENSION
ON THEIR DRY HYDRANT GRANT
THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2003!**

The Hoosier Heartland Dry Hydrant Grant program is proceeding well and is being **extended to September 2003!**

The \$80,000 grant, awarded to the HHRC&D from the USDA Forest Service, provides for the installation of 100 dry hydrants and or drafting basins in the ten County Hoosier Heartland Areas. Those counties are Boone, Brown, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Marion, Monroe, Morgan, and Shelby. The dry hydrants will provide a significant increase in water supplies and may allow some rural fire departments to reduce their ISO rating, thus providing a significant savings to homeowners on their insurance premiums

The project will include reimbursement for all plumbing materials, suction heads, strainers, signage, plus actual installation per project per fire department. The **grant will pay 50 % of the cost of materials and installation.**

Generally labor will provide the 50 percent match for the material.

Several Fire Departments have already installed dry hydrants while others have contracted to install and are in the planning/approval process. They include: Hazelwood Liberty TWP Fire Department, EEL River Fire Department, Zionsville Fire Department, Brooklyn Volunteer Fire Department, Worth TWSP Volunteer Fire Department, Benton TWP Volunteer Fire Department, New Whiteland Fire Department, Marietta Volunteer Fire Department, Trafalgar Fire Department, Fairland Fire Department, and Amity Community Fire Department.

A large amount of grant money is still available at this time. Fire Departments can obtain a checklist and grant application form from Bonni Browning at 317-290-3250 or bonni@in.rcdnet.org. Fire Departments! If you know of an area in need of better water supplies, or have a site in mind for an installation, please contact Bonni ASAP. Take advantage of this grant extension and mild winter and give us a call! Remember the grant has been extended to **September 2003!**

ADDITIONAL DISTRICT MILESTONES

You are accustomed to seeing District staff surveying grass waterways or making field visits on construction sites, but we also engage in many other conservation activities during the year. Here are some highlights:

- ◆ Our conservation education efforts touched an estimated 3000 students during the year – youth and adults. These events include Hendricks County Ag. Day, Avon Elementary Outdoor Ed. Day, our distribution of Keep Indianapolis Beautiful tree seedlings to elementary school classrooms and a day spent talking about watersheds to Tri-West Middle School students. In addition, we had a booth at the Hendricks County Lawn and Garden Show, and helped Youth Leadership Hendricks County stage a Mock Plan Commission Meeting. Assisting with an unusual event, staff participated in hosting an Urban Conservation Field Tour as part of the Soil and Water Conservation Society International Meeting held in Indianapolis over the summer. At yet another event, with the District and County Surveyor David Gaston as hosts, staff member Jim Woody and DNR Stormwater Specialist Doug Wolf provided a very informative seminar on Effective Erosion Control Plans to over 50 developers, engineers and construction personnel.
- ◆ EPA is ratcheting up its stormwater quality requirements for growing communities. The urbanizing areas of the County as well as the towns of Brownsburg, Avon, Plainfield, Danville and Pittsboro can expect to be subject to the new Phase II stormwater requirements. District staff have been monitoring and participating in State rulemaking activities related to this program. We also have been contemplating how we will be a part of an increased emphasis on controlling erosion on construction sites, and increased public participation and education as part of this new program.
- ◆ Did you know that your District Conservationist Henry Wallis attends virtually every meeting of the Hendricks County Area Plan Commission to advise on erosion control and other conservation matters? He also assists the towns of Avon and Plainfield regularly and fields inquiries from other communities as well. In addition the District is pleased to be a part of Planning with Power, a program to link natural resource concerns with community planning decisions.
- ◆ District staff have taken the role as advocates this year dealing first with trying to resolve uncertainties surrounding the Practice Incentive Payments of the Conservation Reserve Program. Also, we have increased communications with the Farm Service Agency County Committee to influence the issue of Practice Cost "Hold-Downs."
- ◆ The Clean Water Indiana grant program brought a few additional cost-share dollars to the County this year. The staff has been busy devising procedures, forms and identifying prospective customers for its Quail Unlimited Field Border Initiative and its Stream Buffer Filter Strip Initiative using these funds.

Farm Crop Weed & Pest Management : A Core4 Concept

What is it?

It's a comprehensive approach to fine tuning on-farm management of harmful weeds and pests. Today we have improved methods for control of weeds, insects and diseases. Management strategies that allow for better control, with minimum risk to the environment. Resistant plants, cultural controls, soil amendments, beneficial insects, natural enemies, barriers, physical treatments, behavioral disruptants, biological and conventional pesticides are some of these management strategies.

Increases Profits

Inputs such as mechanical cultivation, pesticides, fertilizers and tillage trips cost money. By using best management practices to apply these inputs when they are actually needed, growers can reduce costs. Weed and pest management can help match the best method of control with the optimum time to maximize benefits of the control. Thus, weed and pest management can improve the bottom line for growers.

Reduces Risks

Weed and pest management results in fewer herbicide and any other applications, at reduced rates, using the safest and most effective formulations. This minimizes risk associated with the application including accidents, drift, and any potential toxic effects on non-target species. Scouting helps avoid unexpected pest outbreaks, which can cause heavy losses if not caught and treated.

Protects the Environment

By using mechanical cultivation, pesticides, fertilizers and tillage only when necessary, growers protect the environment, by reducing sediment, and polluted runoff from entering our lakes, streams and rivers. Utilizing scouting and selecting the appropriate control for the weed or pest identified, supports the biological integrity of all life on earth.

Management Tips

- Soil Management – improves organic matter of the soil
- Cultural Practices – improves soil tilth
- Planting – ideal timing
- Pest Trapping – track infestations
- Monitoring – scouting to determine threshold level
- Forecasting – weather information for spraying
- Biological Controls – inhibit pest populations
- Thresholds – level of pest that causes economic loss
- Chemical Controls – most effective, appropriate product
- Record Keeping – for future management decisions

Pest management is just one of the Core4 concepts. Core4 is a common-sense approach to improving farm profitability while addressing nearly 80% of pollution from non-point sources. For more information on how you can have **better soil, cleaner water, greater profits** and a **brighter future** by implementing the Core4 System on your farm contact Bruce Finkbiner, Core4 Coordinator, or your local SWCD office.

WORKING LANDS - CONSERVATION PROGRAM WILL FOLLOW LOCAL LEAD

The conservation program offered to farmers for conservation on "working lands," now gives local officials more say in setting the priorities that direct conservation cost-share funding.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is designed to help agricultural producers put conservation treatments on land they use for food and fiber production. The program addresses natural resource concerns related to erosion, livestock, water quality and forest management.

"Right now EQIP is the program for treating working lands," says State Conservationist Jane Hardisty of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "The Conservation Security Program (CSP), which is on the horizon, looks very promising, but EQIP is ready today. We have experience to stand on with EQIP because it was in the 1996 Farm Bill. And, we have made about a dozen major changes to make it more farmer-friendly."

"But the change I am most excited about is making local priority setting more prominent," says Hardisty. Nobody knows the local resources and needs better than the people who live in each county, so it makes sense that they guide the conservation priorities. We are working with local conservation officials now to set priorities in each county. The new ranking criteria for EQIP will be implemented this spring."

The new streamlining will apply to all the EQIP applications evaluated for this fiscal year (beginning October 1). The new ranking process will use local priorities established at the county level, as well as statewide priorities, and applicants will get immediate feedback on how their applications rank. Applications that were not funded in the past will be re-ranked under the new process if the producer signs up again.

The Hendricks County SWCD held an EQIP ranking meeting on January 17, 2003. Any questions or concerns, contact: Henry Wallis, District Conservationist at (317) 745-2555.

For more information on NRCS or the Farm Bill, go to www.in.nrcs.usda.gov