

# Hendricks COMMUNICATOR



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## We're CELEBRATING 50 years 1951-2001

This past May, the **Hendricks County Soil & Water Conservation District** celebrated its **50<sup>th</sup> year** of providing assistance to landowners with soil, water, and other natural resource assistance in the county.

On **January 29, 2002** will be a special celebration at their **50<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**, 6:00 pm at the Hendricks Community Building.

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts are responsible for soil and water conservation programs and are charged with managing and establishing good sound conservation to protect our natural resources within the county. The majority of the assistance comes from the Indiana Conservation Partnership including the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and IDNR Div. of Soil Conservation. Wise use of our natural resources is of vital importance to the health and progress of the county. Our soil, water, and other natural resources are constantly under pressures that are unprecedented by a growing economy, a broadening technology, and increasing population. Our society today demands more of our natural resources and better management of our environment for living.

### CONGRATULATIONS



**Donna Eddleman** of Sycamore Elementary in Avon was selected as the Indiana Conservation Education Elementary Teacher of the Year. Ms. Eddleman has done an outstanding job by incorporating her lessons into

all subject areas and has broad community outreach and extensions with parents.

Ms. Eddleman was nominated by the Hendricks County Soil & Water Conservation District.

The USDA Ag Service Center remains open in Danville providing technical assistance on conservation programs and non-program assistance to those in Hendricks County.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, IDNR Div. Of Soil Conservation, and the Hendricks County Soil & Water Conservation District will continue their local presence in the county to provide assistance to ag and urban landowners and landusers with natural resource concerns (erosion, drainage, tree planting, wildlife, etc).

The phone number will remain at (317) 745-2555 ext. 3

Mark your calendars and be sure to join us for this special celebration of 50 years. We hope to see you there!

***There is still time to apply for the Continuous CRP - 50% + 40% cost share program for eligible conservation practices!***

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is USDA's single largest environmental improvement program. The Buffer Initiative portion of the CRP program 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:

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

will be lost if the conservation practices are not completed by the end of **September 2002**. 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.

status review. The reviews will determine compliance for sodbuster and swampbuster provisions on both highly erodible land (HEL) and non-HEL land.

## **American Farmland Trust Conducts National Poll**

Results from a recent national poll conducted by American Farmland Trust indicate America's farms and ranches are important to our nation's voters. Of the 1,024 registered voters polled,

- 69% are concerned about loss of farmland development.
- 78% are aware of government income support and approve programs for farmers when they are used to correct low market prices or in cases of drought or flood damage.
- 75% agree support to the American farmer should come with the stipulation that farmers are required to apply "one or more conservation practices," such as protecting wetlands or preventing water pollution.
- 53% agree increasing funds to keep productive farmland from being developed should be a national priority.
- 63% said they'd forego some of a possible \$100 tax refund to protect waterways, wetlands or wildlife habitat. The poll provided compelling information that the American public supports efforts to make conservation a major part of this year's budget as well as the next farm bill.

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## **County Transect Data**

For the thirteenth year a tillage/residue transect was conducted. The transect consists of driving a defined route through the county and recording the land use on both sides of the road at each stop, usually every half mile.

The 2001 results shows:

- \* 33 percent of the corn planted was no-tilled
- \* 71 percent of the soybeans planted were no-tilled.

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## **FARM BILL COMPLIANCE REVIEW**

The nation's most intensive conservation efforts head into the final stretch next year 2002. The Farm Service Agency, as in the past, will randomly select farm program participants for



**Tammy Richardson** receives payment from Jim Woody, Resource Conservationist with IDNR Div. of Soil Conservation for her participation

in the State's Buffer Initiative.

### **State Conservation Buffer Cost Share**

Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) funds have been distributed. The program provided cost-share assistance for establishing and maintaining vegetated field borders. These borders slow erosion and reduce sediment from reaching stream corridors. These funds were used in areas where other programs may not qualify.

# Working Land

## Largest Percentage of Indiana Land Still in Agriculture

By Bob Eddleman, Supervisor

We may have become an urban nation but we remain an agricultural land. Almost 87 percent of Indiana is rural land held in private ownership by several thousands of individuals. This land is often referred to as our "working land" because it is the source of our food and fiber production. Sixty percent of Indiana, or 13.7 million acres is cropland, eight percent is pastureland and sixteen percent is forestland and three percent is other rural land. The responsibility for stewardship of this land lies in the hands of just over 60,000 farmers and their families.

We rely on these fellow citizens and neighbors to produce the food and fiber we need. And they are very good at doing so. Today, each acre of cropland in the US produces nearly three times what was produced on the same acre in 1935. This dramatic productivity increase has made food prices lower for Americans than they are in any other industrial country.

But farmers and ranchers produce much more than food and fiber. Through their care and stewardship they produce safe drinking water, clear flowing streams, lakes full of fish, skies full of ducks and geese and scenic landscapes. We do not buy these commodities in our supermarkets and their prices are not listed on the Chicago Board of Trade, but we value them just the same.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of farms and ranches in producing these non-market environmental goods and services. Nesting success for North American waterfowl has increased by at least a third since 1985, due in large part to farmer and rancher participation in the Conservation and Wetland Reserve Programs. Nearly 88 percent of the water that falls on the United States as rain and snow each year falls on private land before it reaches our lakes and streams and ground water aquifers. Indiana Water Utilities say that the quality of the water coming into their systems has improved greatly in the last twenty years. This is in part due to the rapid adoption of conservation tillage, filter strips and other water quality conservation practices by Indiana farmers.

Indiana's 92 Soil and Water Conservation Districts are proud of the great work our farmers and other land users have done to improve the quality of water in the state and the productivity of our land so that we may all enjoy the high standard of living we have.

## Wetlands still Subject to Protection in Agriculture

Despite the recent Supreme Court decision changing wetland regulations, wetlands are still protected from conversion to agricultural use, as they have been the since the 1985 Food Security Act was passed.

Jane Hardisty State Conservationist with the USDANatural Resources Conservation Service, offers a reminder to farmers that altering a wetland to make it croppable will cause the owner to be ineligible for most USDA programs. This includes commodity and disaster payments for all the land they own or farm.

Wetland Compliance, or "Swampbuster" as it is sometimes called, has been in effect for 15 years, and it is expected to continue with the next Farm Bill in 2002, says Dwayne Howard, Assistant State Conservationist (Programs) for NRCS.

"Nearly all Indiana farmers are fully complying and protecting wetlands," says Howard, "but some of our field staff have received calls from farmers wondering if anything has changed since the recent Supreme Court decision. Nothing has changed regarding draining or altering wetlands for agricultural use," he adds.

Actually, through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and the Floodplain Easement Program (FEP), the farm community is restoring more wetlands than any other group. WRP and FEP help restore wetlands that were converted and used for agriculture. Over 30,000 acres of wetlands have been restored in Indiana through these USDA programs.



## Continuous CRP Signup - Report

During the past several months, applications have been accepted for the Continuous CRP signup. This program is used for the installation of conservation practices such as: **Grass Waterways, Filter Strips, Riparian Buffers**, and etc.

Todate so far:

- √ **Waterways** - 150 farms with 338 different grass waterways have signed up.  
Of these, 115,557 feet of waterway have already been established to date.
- √ **Filter Strips** - 47 farms for a total of 59 different filter strips have signed up.  
Of these, 14,310 feet of filter strips, have already been established.