



Spring 2014

# Conservation Quarterly

CLARK COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Dates to Note

- 3/21/14—*Spring begins*
- 4/2/14—*Spring Tree Sale orders due*
- 4/3/14—*Monthly Board Meeting, 9 a.m.*
- 4/14-17/14—*Tree order pickup*
- 4/18/14—*Good Friday Observed, SWCD office closed*
- 4/22/14—*Earth Day*
- 5/1/14—*Monthly Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.*
- 5/26/14—*Memorial Day Holiday, SWCD office closed*
- 6/5/14—*Monthly Board meeting, 7:30 p.m.*

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## Get Your Rain Barrel Now!

Rain barrel kits are now available! Kits include one 55 gallon plastic barrel, 2—3/4 inch faucets, and instructions for assembly. (Additional materials are required to complete the barrel.)

Contact the SWCD office at 256-2330, ext. 3, to place your order. Kits are \$40 each and are available for pickup Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Order forms are also available on the District home page, [www.clarkswcd.org](http://www.clarkswcd.org).

## Limited Tornado Recovery Funds Available

Through a partnership with the March 2 Recovery organization, the Clark County SWCD has been authorized to disperse grant funds to those persons whose woodlands were damaged in the March 2, 2012, tornado.



Funds are limited, and will be distributed via an application process. Anyone interested in applying may contact the SWCD office at 812-256-2330, ext. 3.

## Wildlife Food Plot Seed For Sale

Encouraging song and game birds, rabbits, and other wildlife to live and grow on our farms and nearby our homes is a goal of many people in Clark County and southern Indiana. By providing good habitat for wildlife, we can achieve that goal, and make a better place for us, and for wildlife!

We can help provide better shelter for wildlife by building brushpiles, planting trees and shrubs, and thinking twice before clearing out fence rows and brushy areas. These areas provide travel lanes and valuable escape routes from predators, in addition to providing places to live and raise young.



We can improve sources of food by planting trees and shrubs and herbaceous cover that will produce food, and by managing brushy and odd areas for wildlife. Another way to produce an abundant supply of wildlife food is to plant a food plot.

The Clark County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is currently selling 5-pound bags of wildlife food plot seed for \$3.50 per bag. Each bag contains a mixture of milo, millet, and buckwheat seed. Seed may be obtained by stopping by the SWCD office at 9608 Highway 62, Charlestown. For more information, contact the Clark County SWCD office at 256-2330, ext. 3.

## Stewardship Week Celebrated



The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) has proclaimed April 27 – May 4, 2014 as Stewardship Week, marking the 59<sup>th</sup> year of the national event. The 2014 Stewardship Week is themed “Dig Deeper,” and focuses on soil, arguably one of the Earth’s most critical natural resources.

Soil is an amazing substance. A complex mix of minerals, air, and water, soil also teems with countless microorganisms, and the decaying remains of once-living things. Soil is made of life and soil makes life.

*To the farmer, soil is where crops grow.*

*To the engineer, soil is a foundation upon which to build.*

*To the ecologist, soil supports communities of living things.*

*To the archaeologist, soil holds clues to past cultures.*

*To the city dweller, soil nurtures grass and gardens.*

*To the soil scientist, soil is all of these things.*

Soil has been called "the skin of the earth" because it is the thin outermost layer of the Earth's crust. Like our own skin, we can't live without soil.

To spread the word of how important it is to protect our soil, the SWCD has materials available to church leaders and educators at no charge. These materials may be obtained by contacting us at 812-256-2330, ext. 3.

### Rent our Equipment

**No-Till Drill - \$8 per acre**

**Outback S2 Guidance Systems -**

**\$10 per day**

**Call 812-256-2330, ext. 3 for scheduling**

**Stop by our office and sign an Equipment Rental Agreement**



Since 1999, key conservation and agricultural organizations have sponsored the River Friendly Farmer (RFF) Program. The statewide initiative recognizes farmers, who through good production management practices helps keep Indiana’s rivers, lakes and streams clean.

River Friendly Farmer nominations are being accepted through June 13, 2014. Farmers chosen will receive special recognition during Farmers Day, August 13th at the 2014 Indiana State Fair.

They will also receive a River Friendly Farmer sign for display on their farmstead and recognition through news articles highlighting them for their stewardship efforts.

Contact the SWCD office for nomination forms.



### Soil Testing Service Offered

The Clark County SWCD is now offering soil testing services for homeowners seeking fertilizer recommendations for their lawn and gardens.



Soil samples may be brought to the SWCD office at 9608 Highway 62, Charlestown. Soil sample bags are available from the SWCD. Cost of a basic test is \$22; a more extensive test is \$32. Both tests provide suggested fertilizer recommendations for up to three crops (i.e. lawn, flowers, trees).

Samples delivered to the SWCD by the close of business on Thursday of each week will be analyzed and recommendations returned by the end of the following week.



#### A Blue Thumb Print...

*Short lawn grass is the preferred habitat of Canada Geese. Geese like open vistas where they can see potential predators. If you have too many geese hanging out and leaving a mess behind, plantings that are approximately their height will make them feel vulnerable to predators and discourage them from congregating.*

## Wet Spring?

Will we have a wet spring? Given the amounts of snow and ice we received over this winter, some are saying we will. And if we do, the problem of “prevented planting” acres may arise—those acres unplanted to corn or soybeans due to excessive rainfall and prolonged ponding conditions. “Prevented planting” acres, while unfortunate, can be managed in ways to prevent further soil degradation and to increase soil productivity for next year. Cover crops are an excellent means to do this.

Prolonged and excessive rainfall and ponding can cause soil aggregates to break down, especially near the soil surface. Flooding and erosion remove valuable topsoil and all the nutrients, organic matter and soil organisms it contains. When fields finally dry out, the surface becomes hard and crusted and is prone to further erosion by water or wind. If tillage is performed to control weeds and the soil is left bare, soil organic matter declines and nutrients can be lost through leaching, even on fields not subject to water erosion.

To rebuild lost productive capacity and improve soil quality, growing a cover crop for the remainder of the season is crucial. **In fact, having something green and growing during all non-frozen times of the year is a key concept for improving soil quality, decreasing nitrate leaching to drainage waters, and improving water quality.** Here are some of the attributes of cover crops:

### Improve soil tilth and biological activity in topsoil

Cover crops protect the soil from further erosion by both water and wind. High biomass cover crops help build soil organic matter, improve soil aggregation, and stimulate soil biological activity by adding their roots and shoots to the soil. Fibrous roots enmesh soil particles and provide food for microorganisms which in turn produce polysaccharides and other “sticky” substances which stabilize soil aggregates.

## Tree Seedling Orders Still Accepted

Tree seedlings are still available to Indiana landowners through the IDNR Division of Forestry nursery in Vallonia, IN. These trees may be used for reforestation, erosion control, wildlife habitat development, watershed improvement, wetlands enhancement, windbreak, or other conservation purposes. Plant materials cannot be redistributed or resold for profit.

Order forms are available in the Clark County SWCD office or from the IDNR web site. [www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/3606.htm](http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/3606.htm).

For assistance in deciding what species to plant, contact Clark County’s District Forester, Allie Cline at (812) 294-4306, or [ACline1@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:ACline1@dnr.IN.gov).



### Increase permeability and decrease compaction

Deep rooted cover crops can penetrate compacted layers and provide deep, continuous channels for water percolation and root penetration of subsequent cash crops. Prevented planting acres have a longer time window for these tap-rooted crops to grow than is present after typical soybean or corn harvest dates, and so the benefits can be substantially greater than possible in a normal year.

### Build soil nitrogen

Cover crops can build soil nitrogen by fixing atmospheric N (legumes) or by trapping residual soil N to prevent it from leaching into drainage waters. A legume or legume mix planted in early summer may provide more than half of the required N for next year’s corn crop.

When selecting which cover crops to plant, producers should consider the main purpose of the cover crops for their situation. Grasses usually provide the greatest amount of biomass both below and above ground and will build soil organic matter most quickly. Legumes will fix atmospheric nitrogen that can be used by next year’s cash crop. Brassicas such as oilseed radish, turnip, rapeseed and canola have tap roots that help break up tillage pans and improve permeability while being an excellent nitrogen scavenger.

For prevented planting conditions it is best to seed the cover crop with a drill or planter to assure good soil seed contact. This is especially important given the crusted, hard top soil often present after prolonged soil ponding.

Cover crops can be an excellent management tool to improve soil productivity under any conditions but especially on prevented planting acres. Producers are encouraged to utilize the opportunity to rebuild soil productive capacity after a difficult spring by growing cover crops for the remainder of the growing season.

*Producers are advised to check with FSA and their crop insurance agent about harvest restrictions for cover crops.*

	Planting trees this fall?
	Please record the trees you plant at the Plant A Tree For You And Me website: <a href="http://www.clarkswcd.org/PAT/openpage.htm">www.clarkswcd.org/PAT/openpage.htm</a> Help green Southern Indiana!

9608 Highway 62  
Charlestown, IN 47111  
812-256-2330, ext. 3  
Fax: 812-256-0362



**CLARK COUNTY  
SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION  
DISTRICT**

**Bulk Rate  
U.S. Postage PAID  
Charlestown, IN  
Permit No. 6**

*SWCD Supporters....we thank you!*

*Clark County Farm Bureau  
Dan Cristiani Excavating  
Farm Credit Mid-America  
Huber Orchard & Winery  
TGJE II  
Kruer Grading-Seeding, Inc.*

*Jim O'Neal Ford  
Memphis Meat Processing  
New Washington State Bank  
Wright Brothers Implement Sales  
Sanders Farm Service—Pioneer Seed*

## Grant Happenings



The Silver Creek Watershed Improvement project currently has agricultural and urban cost-share dollars available to implement best management practices (BMPs) on land within the watershed in order to improve water quality. BMPs are effective and practical methods which prevent or reduce the movement of sediment, nutrients, pesticides and other pollutants from the land to surface or ground water.

The cost-share program provides **60% match** of the allowed actual costs of implementing approved BMPs. Technical assistance is provided. If you are an agricultural producer, homeowner, organization or entity and are located in the Silver Creek Watershed district, you may be eligible to apply. Some of the practices that may be funded include; **livestock exclusion from streams, cover crops, streambank stabilization, critical area planting, pasture/hayland seeding, and riparian buffers.**

Visit [www.mysilvercreekwatershed.weebly.com](http://www.mysilvercreekwatershed.weebly.com) for more for more information about the cost share program or contact David Trotter, Watershed Technician, at 812-256-2330, ext. 110, or [david.trotter@in.nacdn.net](mailto:david.trotter@in.nacdn.net).

The SWCD's Fourteen Mile Creek/Goose Creek-OH River (Indiana portion) Improvement Project is now underway.

The planning process will begin with the establishment of the project's Steering Committee. Persons concerned about the condition of these watersheds are encouraged to volunteer to serve on the committee. The first committee meeting scheduled for March 25, 2014, 5:30 p.m., at the Clark County SWCD office.

If you would like to volunteer, but are unable to attend that evening, or would like more information, please contact our office at 812-256-2330, ext. 3, or email our Watershed Coordinator, Chelsea Tooley at [14mile.watershed.outreach@gmail.com](mailto:14mile.watershed.outreach@gmail.com).

*Please note: the watershed management plan will address water quality issues, not water flow issues such as building structures to contain water.*

