

The Septic-Soil Connection

Report on the Conference, November 9, 2006

According to Dr. Brad Lee, Assistant Professor of Soils Science, Purdue University, Indiana soils aren't *bad*. Some soils in Indiana just have more problems than others when it comes to septic systems. The soils in Northeast Indiana are great soils – for crops. But we need to take extra care and attention when placing septic systems in this area.

Dr. Lee joined Dr. Don Jones, Professor of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, Purdue Univ, for a conference on November 9 focusing on septic system maintenance and other issues, such as placement of septic systems, common causes of failure, and the importance of common sense use and regular pumping (cleaning). The conference, entitled *Down and Dirt – The Septic-Soil Connection*, drew 53 attendees, including homeowners, installers, inspectors, real estate professionals, and soil scientists. A question-and-answer session allowed many from the audience to ask specific questions of the presenters.



According to one attendee, it was "...A great presentation for conscientious homeowners. This helps to educate on do's and don'ts of septic system use."

Health department professionals were also on hand to answer questions and provide information. Gary Chapple of the Fort Wayne-AlLEN County department joined Bernie Sukala and Cathy Manuel from the DeKalb County department and Jack Chronister from Noble County. Denise Wright, Environmental Scientist for Residential Onsite Sewage Systems for the Indiana State Department of Health was also available to provide information and answer questions.

A light supper preceding the conference was provided by Eickholtz, Inc., Zimmerman Excavating, Pirana ABG Systems, and LaOtto Excavating. *Down and Dirty* was sponsored by the SJRWI, along with the three county health departments, the DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, funded through the Cedar Creek Watershed Management Plan Implementation grant.

For more information about septic system maintenance, check out the links on the Initiative's website, www.sjrwi.org.