

ST. JOSEPH RIVER REVIEW

Volume 10, Issue 1

Quarterly Newsletter of the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative Partnership

Winter, 2008

Newsletter Editor: Tina Puitz

Best Ever! Expo 2008



"Good job!" "Great information." "I think this was the best Expo yet," were just a few of the comments heard from those who attended the 7th annual Tri-State Conservation Farming Expo held on February 27 at the ACD Museum in Auburn, Indiana.

What made it so great

Over 250 producers and landowners participated in the Expo and listened to presentations from farming and conservation experts from across the tri-state area. A large percentage of participants earned private and/or commercial pesticide applicator credits. Key event sponsors were Alliance Agra and Monsanto; Great Lakes Hybrids and North Central Co-op sponsored breakfast and morning refreshments. Approximately 27 local and regional companies exhibited their products or sponsored tables for participants.

Thank you

Our special thanks go to presenters Dr. Fred Whitford, Purdue Pesticide Program; Dr. Kurt Thelen, Michigan State University; Dr. Christopher Hurt, Purdue University; Dr. Brent Sohngen, The Ohio State University; John Crumrine, Heidelberg College Extension; Steve Davis, USDA-NRCS Ohio; Drs. Elizabeth Pappas and Darrell Norton, Agricultural Research Service Purdue University; Ray McCormick, no-till farmer and conservationist, Vincennes, IN; Todd Hesterman, Multi-Co. Conservation Action Project, Napoleon, OH; Kevin Elder, ODNR; Barry Fisher, USDA-NRCS IN; and Expert Farmer Panelists Allen Dean, Scott Oberlin, Wayne Smith and Jamie Scott. ■

Results From Tri-state Conservation Farming Expo

by Jason Buuck, Agronomy Technician

Ninety producers completed our farm survey at the 2008 Tri-State Conservation Farming Expo. These producers account for 87,243 acres planted in our northern region. It was interesting to see that 39% of the acres are going to corn and 49% of the acres are going to soybeans. We will see how these numbers compare to the USDA Planting Attention Report that comes out March 31. An impressive number from the survey is that 75% of the corn acreage is no-tilled or strip-tilled.

With rising fertilizer prices and increasing environmental concerns, interest in cover crops is growing. The results of the survey showed that 21% of the producers from the Expo are trying cover crops. Cover crops being used include: annual ryegrass, cereal rye, oilseed radish, hairy vetch, clover, timothy, oats, and wheat. It is good to see such a variety of cover crops being used.

On the survey 56 producers asked for information on the programs offered in the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative. Those programs are strip-till equipment rental, cost share opportunities, tree planting & wetland restoration for native habitat, and information on cover crops. Thank you to those who completed the survey; this provides an opportunity for us to contact landowners and producers to talk about opportunities available to them.

For more information on programs in the St. Joseph River Watershed contact Jason Buuck at 260-484-5848 ext. 108 ■



Volunteer Water Monitoring

Did you know . . .

by Jerry Hohla, Hoosier Riverwatch trainer and SJRWI board member

- ▶ the presence of mayflies and stoneflies indicate healthy water in a stream or river?
- ▶ sediment from erosion of soils adjacent to streams and rivers can destroy fish habitat?
- ▶ low dissolved oxygen levels in the water often signal serious pollution problems.?

These are all indicators of water quality.

But why should you be concerned about water quality?

Many communities in Indiana and Ohio draw their drinking water from these streams and rivers. Anyone who drinks, fishes, swims



canoes or otherwise uses or appreciates these water resources should have an interest in the quality of the water flowing through and across their watershed.

The Hoosier Riverwatch program

Hoosier Riverwatch is a program sponsored by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources which encourages Indiana residents to be involved in the monitoring of the water quality in our streams and rivers. The Riverwatch program

teaches volunteers a consistent, organized and scientific approach to taking inventory of our water resources. The program is designed to monitor wadeable streams. Volunteers are trained in a day long session to make three types of observations, habitat evaluation, chemical monitoring and an inventory of bottom dwelling insects. Once the training is completed, volunteers may check out equipment kits with all the necessary tools to carry out their observations. Volunteers need only spend a couple of hours streamside, three to four times a year making observations and collecting data. They are then encouraged to submit their data into the Riverwatch on-line database. This database is one tool that Indiana environmental agencies may use to help prioritize cleanup projects on our streams and rivers.



Who can participate in the Hoosier Riverwatch program?

Anyone 18 years or older who has a little spare time and a concern for our environment, such as concerned citizens, community organizations, associations, school science classes and owners of property adjacent to water bodies. No scientific training is necessary. The SJRWI is a local sponsor of Hoosier Riverwatch. Training sessions are conducted three to four times a year in the Fort Wayne area. Sessions include classroom and outdoor training at a local stream. It's a fun learning experience! Come join us! ■

Hoosier Riverwatch Basic Training Sessions

- May 31 SJRWI office, located in the Allen County USDA Service Center building, 3718 New Vision Drive, Fort Wayne
- June 18 Metea County Park, 8401 Union Chapel Road, Leo-Cedarville

To register for a class, please call Tina at 260-484-5848 x117.



SJRWI Receives Recognition

Congratulations to Jane Loomis, Executive Director of the SJRWI and Jerry Hohla, SJRWI board member for being awarded the 2007 Volunteer of the Year by Hoosier Riverwatch.

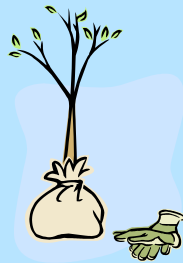
Cedar Creek Subwatershed

Education Programs

at the Allen County SWCD Tree Pickup

April 5

Salomon Farm Park
817 W. Dupont Rd.



Programs include:

- ✦ How to plant trees - 9 a.m.
- ✦ Backyard conservation - 10 a.m.
- ✦ Endangered species & their habitats - 11 a.m.

Tree pickup 8:00 to 12 noon

Education programs sponsored by St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative

Those Darn Geese!

What you need to know about nuisance geese.

April 15

5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Riecke Park Lodge, Auburn

Light supper included

RSVP appreciated to DeKalb
County SWCD 260-925-5620 x3



Topics include:

- Nuisance Geese, Shannon Winks, IDNR Urban Wildlife Biologist
- Nuisance Geese, water quality and challenges for the City of Auburn, Todd Sattison, MS4 Program Coordinator
- Cost share opportunities for goose deterrent landscaping, Allen Haynes, Natural Resource Coordinator

Cedar Creek Education Curriculum

The SJRWI, guided by consultants Nancy Leininger and Pam George, is creating a watershed curriculum at the middle-school level that focuses on the Cedar Creek, the St. Joseph River and the Maumee Basin. The five-day curriculum is correlated to Indiana Academic Standards in science, history and reading for grades four and five. The curriculum is scheduled to pilot this spring and will be distributed to all schools in the Cedar Creek watershed in the fall of 2008.

The goal of the program is to provide a curriculum for students in grades 4-5 living within the St. Joseph Watershed, specifically the Cedar Creek Watershed. It will introduce the concept of watersheds through various classroom activities that explore main

basins and tributaries of the St. Joseph River watershed, emphasizing the impact of daily actions on the quality of consumed water.

Curriculum materials include the physical layout and history of the St. Joseph watershed, a values activity where students look at their personal responsibility to the watershed, maps, activities on how water quality affects species and a mock stakeholder meeting. ■

Coming Soon to your home computer



SJR Water Quality Data Online

The online database project, which will make water quality monitoring information available to the public, is progressing very well. The project is currently in the testing phase and we hope to have the database up and running this spring. Once the database goes live, the SJRWI will be offering presentations covering access and use of the database information. Watch for more information on our website at www.sjrwi.org and in our next newsletter. ■

Wetlands Are an Important Part of Our Landscape

by Kyle Quandt



Since the beginning of North America's colonization, many Americans have viewed wetlands as wastelands that should be drained and used to facilitate progress. However, wetlands are actually a vital part of our ecosystem and can advance progress because of the benefits they provide, including flood control and pollution reduction. Wetlands may also be used for

recreation and provide a habitat for fish and many endangered species.

In 1971 the world recognized the importance of conserving these vital habitats when a number of countries signed the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. This year's theme for World Wetland Day, which was celebrated on February 2, was "Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People." This powerful message reminds us that the health of wetlands and humans are intertwined; proper management and conservation of remaining wetlands is critical not only to the health of our wetlands, but also to our health.

Wetlands function as natural sponges. An acre of wetland can store one to 1.5 million gallons of flood water. Wetlands release this water slowly, thus mitigating the erosive potential of heavy rains and flood waters.

But wetlands don't have to be large to be helpful. A network of small wetlands can store enormous amounts of water, helping to reduce the potential for flooding during heavy rains. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) asserts the reason floods have become so costly is because the United States as a whole has lost over half of its wetlands. Indiana has lost nearly 85% of its original wetlands. The floods which we experience each year might be curtailed if more wetlands were available to help mitigate the effects of heavy rainfall.

Some of the water entering a wetland percolates through the soil and recharges ground water, which is the source of

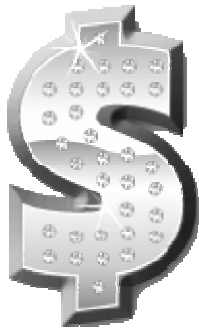
drinking water in many northern Indiana communities. Some water flows on the surface through a series of wetlands before entering a stream or lake. The aquatic plants in wetlands are living water filters. As the water circulates around the plants, sediment drops out and the plant's roots and microorganisms absorb many pollutants, converting them to less harmful elements. As the supply of fresh drinking water diminishes world wide, it is more important than ever that wetlands are protected and remain available to perform these natural water purification services.

According to the EPA, wetlands provide up to 75% of the fish and shellfish harvested commercially in the US and account for nearly 90% of all fish caught through recreational fishing. Salmon, the most consumed fish in the US, rely heavily on coastal wetlands for part of their life cycle. In Indiana, wetlands provide many opportunities for recreational fishing.

Species diversity in wetlands has often been compared with that of tropical rainforests and coral reefs. Wetlands supply habitat for more than one third of threatened and endangered plant and animal species in the US and thus are ideal locations for outdoor recreational activities such as bird and wildlife watching, hiking, and photography ■

Board of Directors	
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Joe Draper The Nature Conservancy	Kevin Breit SWPI Technician
Dan Easterday Hillsdale County, MI farmer	Tina Puitz Program Support Assistant
Bob Gillespie IPFW Biology Department	Jason Buuck Agronomy Technician

USFWS Stewardship Grant



Cost-share money is available to landowners in the St. Joseph River watershed for improving habitat for endangered species such as the Blandings Turtle and the blue-spotted salamander. Wetland restoration and tree planting are key components to restoring and maintaining the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the St. Joseph River and its watershed. The St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative can provide enhancement payments for practices installed through 2009. For more information, contact the SJRWI at 260-484-5848 x120. ■

Did you know ... the salamander can lose its tail?

Blue-spotted salamanders are found from eastern central North America and stretch in a broad band across to the Atlantic Provinces and northern New England. They are found around the Great Lakes and west as far as central Manitoba. They reach as far north as James Bay, Ontario.

One of the best times to see blue-spotted salamanders is just after the ice melts in the forest ponds. They can often be seen near the edge of the pond.

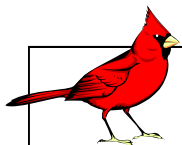
The blue-spotted salamander lives in deciduous and coniferous forests. They are most abundant in moist woodlands with sandy soil. They differ from other salamanders in that they are found above ground throughout the warmer months. During the day they stay undercover out of the direct sunlight. They spend the summer and fall in damp forests, searching for food at night. Their diet includes insects, spiders, worms, and other small invertebrates.



The salamander breeds in woodland ponds and ditches. They breed in April in small ponds where the female will attach egg masses of a dozen fertile eggs to submerged debris or at the base of sticks, plants or rocks. Up to 500 eggs a year can be laid by one female.

The eggs take about one month to hatch in which the salamander larvae will have gills and develop front and hind legs. Salamanders will transform into adults in mid to late summer and grow to about 3.5 to 5.5 inches in length.

When a blue-spotted salamander senses danger, it lashes its tail back and forth and produces a noxious secretion. If the tail is grabbed, the tail will detach and while the predator is busy with the detached tail, the salamander slips off to safety. In time, a new tail will grow to replace the lost one. ■



Hiking the Hague

Presented by the DeKalb County SWCD & the Auburn Parks & Recreation Department

Work Day 2008

Monday, April 21 at 5:00 p.m.

Tasks - mulch trail and replace trail edges

Rain date: Monday, May 5 at 5:00 p.m.

For more information call the DeKalb County SWCD at 260-925-5620 x3.



Other Hague Programs

Wildflowers of The Hague Nature Area

Tuesday, April 29 at 6:30 p.m.

Wetlands & Wildlife at The Hague

Tuesday, June 17 at 6:30 p.m.

Tree ID & Fun Facts at The Hague

Tuesday, August 19 at 6:30 p.m.





to our 2008 Tri-State Conservation Farming Expo Sponsors & Exhibitors

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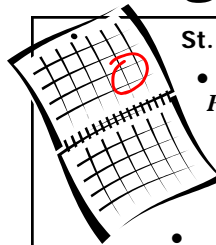


Upcoming Board of Directors Meetings

April 7 and June 2 at the DeKalb County Annex Building in Auburn, IN

beginning at 6:30 p.m. The public is invited to attend. Board of Directors meetings for the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative are on the first Monday of Feb., Apr., June, Oct. and Dec. ■

Upcoming Events



St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative

- **April 5** *Allen County Tree Pickup & Education Programs*, Salomon Farm, Fort Wayne, IN, 8-12 noon
- **April 7** *Board of Directors Meeting*, DeKalb County Annex Building, Auburn, IN, 6:30 p.m.
- **April 15** *Those Darn Geese!*, Riecke Park Lodge, Auburn, IN, 5:30-8:00 p.m.
- **April 21** *Work Day 2008*, The Hague Nature Area, Auburn, IN, 5:00 p.m.
- **April 29** *Wildflowers of The Hague Nature Area*, The Hague Nature Area, Auburn, IN, 6:30 p.m.
- **May 20** *Native Grasses & Wildflowers*, Izaak Walton League Speaker Series, Eckhart Public Library, Auburn, IN, 6:30 p.m.
- **May 31 & June 18** *Hoosier Riverwatch Volunteer Monitoring Workshops*, May 31 at the SJRWI office and June 13 at Metea Park. Times TBA. Register by calling 484-5848 x117.
- **June 2** *Board of Directors Meeting*, DeKalb County Annex Building, Auburn, IN, 6:30 p.m.



to all our volunteers, stakeholders and partners who help promote the work of the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative through donations of time and treasure.

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