

ST. JOSEPH RIVER REVIEW

Volume 9, Issue 3

Quarterly Newsletter of the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative Partnership

Fall, 2007

Newsletter Editor: Tina Puitz

Ag Opportunities Offered by the Initiative

Large amounts of rain the previous week did not dampen interest at the Allen County SWCD and St. Joseph River Watershed summer conservation field day, "Getting into the Zone," which was held at the Ray Melcher farm near New Haven, on August 30, drawing about 160 producers.

Equipment from various manufacturers was on display, including tractors, nutrient placement implements, and zone and strip till units. Presentations by Dr. Tony Vyn (Purdue University), Mike Peterson (Orthman Mfg.); Rich Recker (Recker Farm Supply); Darrel Norton (USDA Ag Research Service); and Sherman Liechty (Allen County NRCS) focused on strip tillage, precision fertilizer and seed placement, cropping rotation, gypsum and polyacrylamide soil amendments, and the latest information on state and federal farm programs. Congressman Mark Souder (3rd District, Indiana) addressed the participants shortly before lunch.

Variety plots, rainfall simulators, lightbar guidance systems and field demonstrations of RTK-guided tractors and zone tillage equipment rounded out the day.

The St. Joseph River Watershed Sediment, Pesticide and Nutrient Reduction Project

An exciting cost-share program is available to landowners in the St. Joseph watershed. Our goal is to increase conservation tillage and to improve the use of precision application techniques and practices for nutrients and pesticides. This program has a 75% cost share up to \$3,000 on conservation tillage attachments, GPS guidance systems, yield monitors or precision application controllers and attachments.

For more information on any of these programs available in the St. Joseph River Watershed, call Jason Buuck at 260-484-5848 x 3.

See photos of the "Getting into the Zone" Field Day on page 5.

The BMP Challenge

Designed to help farmers try out nutrient and tillage best management practices (BMPs) on their own fields without risk to their income.

For more information, call your local SWCD office, or check out the web at www.BMPchallenge.org.



Hello, my name is Jason Buuck and I'm the new Agronomy Technician for Allen County Soil and Water Conservation District and the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative. Let me give you a little background about myself. I grew up on a small

grain farm in southeast Allen County where I enjoyed working and living on the farm. In the last twelve years, I've worked in agricultural businesses as a maintenance man, commercial applicator and salesman. Two years ago I bought a small farm of my own and I'm learning the ups and downs, INS and OUTS of farming.

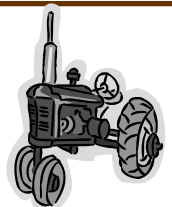
In your watershed, I hope to help you lower your OUTS and increase your INS with the cost-share opportunities and with the zone/strip-till equipment rental program while improving the water quality in the watershed. I'm looking forward to meeting and working with landowners and farm operators in the watershed. Please call to see how we can assist you in your farm operation. Jason Buuck (260) 484-5848 ext. 108 ■

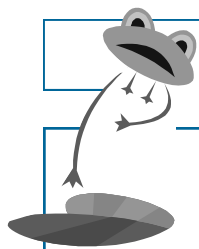


SAVE THE DATE!

2008 Tri-State Conservation Tillage Expo

February 27, 2008





Lower St. Joseph-Bear Creek Subwatershed

Final Watershed Management Plan

The final draft of the Lower St. Joseph-Bear Creek Watershed Management Plan has been submitted to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) for approval. The plan can be viewed at www.sjrwi.org ■



E.coli training

Hoosier Riverwatch Trainings

There will be an E.coli training held at the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative office on Wednesday, September 26 at 6:00 p.m. The training will include preparation and collection of samples, hands-on plating and incubation and identifying and counting E.coli colonies. Anyone who has taken a Hoosier Riverwatch Volunteer Stream Monitoring training class is eligible to attend this class. The Initiative office is located in the Allen County USDA Service Center building at 3718 New Vision Drive. Call Tina to register at 260-484-5848 x117. Please plan to attend! ■



World Water Monitoring Day (WWMD) is an international outreach program that increases public awareness and involves people in protecting water resources around the world. WWMD is held every year between September 18 and October 18. For more information see www.wwmd.org ■

What does my dishwasher have to do with the environment?

It's not the dishwasher, it's the detergent that is used to clean your dishes. Although phosphorus has been banned in laundry detergents, most dishwashing detergent still contains this element. Phosphorus is widely used in detergents because it reduces water hardness and prevents dirt from being deposited back onto your dishes. While phosphorus works well for cleaning your dishes, once it is released into the environment through household wastewater, the results are not so desirable.

What is phosphorus?

Phosphorus is a natural mineral that comes from rocks and occurs naturally in small amounts in the waters of this region. It is an essential element, a nutrient for plants and animals. Phosphorus can be dissolved in the water, or it can be attached to sediment. In the form of phosphates, it is present in fertilizers, pesticides, and detergents. It can be present in sewage and animal waste. It takes millions of years for free phosphorus to return into the form of rocks. Therefore, phosphorus is not "used up."

So what's the problem?

Excess phosphorus becomes fertilizer for the algae in our lakes and streams and contributes to eutrophication of lakes and streams. It's a deadly cycle: Nutrients feed algae. Algae bloom and die, releasing their nutrients. Bacteria use oxygen from the water to break down dead algae and other waste. This reduces available oxygen in the water. Reduced oxygen can kill animals and fish by reducing the amount of healthy habitat available to them. Areas of reduced oxygen allow the release of more nutrients from the stream bottom and suspended sediments. These nutrients are again available to feed more algae and the cycle begins again.

How Much Phosphate Is In My Dishwasher Detergent?						
Dishwasher Detergents	Powder		Liquid Gel		Gel Pacs/Tabs	
	% Phosphorus	Grams per Tbsp.	% Phosphorus	Grams per Tbsp.	% Phosphorus	Grams per Tbsp.
Cascade Complete w/ Bleach	6.9	1.1	5.0	1.0	8.0	1.1
Cascade	6.4	1.0	4.5	1.0	8.0	1.1
Everyday Living	6.1	.9	4.0	.7		
Target	6.0	.8			8.0	1.9
Palmolive			3.3	.6		
Electrasol	4.5	.72	3.7	.7	8.7	2.2
Seventh Generation			0	0		

And what happens to the stream?

Over time, algae and other microscopic plant life can become super abundant and "choke" a lake or stream. The water in these highly enriched lakes and streams have low transparency and low dissolved oxygen. Fish and aquatic animals die. Eventually the water dries up.

What Can I do?

- Everyone washes dishes. Check your dishwashing detergent label to see how much phosphorus it contains. Choose a brand with low phosphorus!
- Use a low or no-phosphorus fertilizer on your lawn. Check the labels of your products, or insist that your lawn care service use environmentally friendly products with low or no phosphorus.

Continued on page 5, PHOSPHORUS

Cedar Creek Subwatershed



Cedar Creek Group Participates in Auburn's National Night Out 2007

The Cedar Creek Stakeholders Group participated in Auburn's National Night Out on August 7. Several members of the group conducted a survey and handed out brochures highlighting information about the Cedar Creek. Tadd Boman's red kayak helped to draw interested onlookers to our booth, and ice-cold water provided by the DeKalb County SWCD was a hit on the warm evening.

While the community band entertained those strolling through Eckhart Park and the various exhibits, we talked to over 100 stakeholders about the Creek and asked that they complete our survey. 57% of the approximately 100 respondents identified themselves as Auburn residents; of the remaining respondents, 21% identified themselves from other areas, and 21% did not identify where they live in the watershed.

Our goal with the survey was to get a sense of what stakeholders already know, and what kinds of educational opportunities we need to pursue to help all our citizens become "water smart."

Here are some results of the survey:

- **Safe drinking water:** Of 99 respondents, 64% agreed that their home water supply is safe to drink. 27% of the respondents were not sure. *City customers rely on the safety of the municipal water supply; rural homeowners need to protect and test their wells periodically to ensure safe supply.*
- **Storm water runoff:** Of 99 respondents, 52% agreed that storm water runoff is a source of pollution for the Cedar Creek. 27% were not sure and 21% disagreed. *Untreated storm water adds many pollutants to our streams and rivers.*
- **Wetlands:** Of 97 respondents, 65% agreed that wetlands help to filter pollutants out of drainage water. Again, 27% were unsure and 8% disagreed. *Wetlands hold water and plants living in wetlands have the ability to remove many nutrients from the water before it passes downstream or infiltrates into the soil.*
- **Where is Auburn?** To the statement "Auburn is part of the Mississippi River Watershed," 20% agreed, 31% disagreed, and 49% were unsure. *Auburn lies in the St. Joseph River watershed. The St. Joseph flows north to Lake Erie, and is NOT part of the Mississippi watershed.*
- **Buffers and filter strips:** Of 96 respondents to the statement "Buffers and filter strips help protect streams from pollution," 53% agreed and 38% were unsure. *These 20-60 foot wide strips of grasses and other vegetation help to slow down runoff and remove pollutants from agricultural fields.*
- **Bacteria:** 63% of respondents agreed that bacteria in streams can come from wildlife; 17% said that it could not, and 20% were unsure. *It's not just human waste, but also droppings from nuisance geese, deer, and other wildlife contribute to the bacteria load in our streams and rivers.*
- **Trash and litter:** Of 98 respondents, 88% agreed that cleaning up litter and trash along driveways and streets helps to protect their water supply. *Trash and litter not only clog up storm drains, they carry other pollutants with them.*
- **Fertilizing lawns and gardens:** Of 98 respondents, 35% agreed to the statement, "The best time to fertilize lawns or gardens is before a rainstorm." *Actually, a rainstorm is likely to wash that expensive fertilizer right down the storm drain!*

Thanks to Tadd Boman, Gretel Smith, Al Diefenbach, Fred and Maryanna Feitler, Jane Loomis and Allen Haynes for assisting with the National Night Out event.

Cedar Creek Stakeholder Meeting

September 18, 6:00 p.m.

Eckhart Public Library
Auburn, IN



Did you ever wonder... What happens in a wetlands when the sun goes down?

Experience wildlife first hand at the

Twilight Tour of Camp Scott Wetlands

September 25, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., 3615 Oxford Street

For more information call (260) 427-1381

Something's Always Happening on the River...

SJRWI Annual Meeting Honors River Advocates

The St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative annual meeting held on July 25 included a canoe float down the St. Joseph River and demonstration of water quality monitoring early in the day at the Williams County Fairgrounds in Montpelier, OH. A picnic supper was served at the Moose Lodge in Montpelier later that evening and Jane Loomis, executive director of the Initiative, highlighted projects from the past year.

The first annual River Otter Award was presented to Dan Wire of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Wire is a teacher at Northside High School, and has been working for more than 10 years with the City of Fort Wayne on river water quality issues. Wire is a member of the FW City Utilities Sewer Advisory Group and has been instrumental in helping the City develop a protocol for keeping river levels steady. He has also served as a member of City Utilities' Curdes Avenue Task Force and currently serves as President of the Northside Neighborhood Association.



Board member Tara Storey presents the River Otter Award to Dan Wire (left) and Stewardship Award to Pastor Paul Row and Phil Carpenter (right).

The St. Joseph River Stewardship Award was accepted by Phil Carpenter and Rev. Paul Row on behalf of the St. Joseph River Parks Inc. in St. Joe, IN. The St. Joseph River Parks group created, without any taxpayer funding a 1.3 mile paved greenway trail in tiny St. Joe, Indiana (population 478). The trail provides scenic views and educational opportunities. ■



US Fish and Wildlife grant dollars available.

The Initiative has money available to reforest and restore wetlands for permanent native habitat in the St. Joseph River Watershed in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan. The grant is made possible through the US Fish and Wildlife's Private Lands Stewardship Grant program.

Eligible land includes acres in the territories of threatened and endangered species, including the copperbelly water snake, several species of endangered and at-risk mussels, the Indiana bat and the Eastern Massasuga rattlesnake.

For more information, contact the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative at 484-5848 x120. More information about the USFWS can be found at www.fws.gov ■

Board of Directors Meetings

The public is invited to attend the Board of Directors meetings for the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative on the first Monday of Feb., Apr., June, Oct. and Dec. The next meeting will be October 1 at the DeKalb County Annex Building, Auburn, IN. ■



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mary Jane Slaton, Chair City of Fort Wayne, IN	Marvin Dietsch Williams Co. Farm Bureau	Bob Gillespie IPFW Biology Department	Tara Storey Fort Wayne-Allen Co. Resident	STAFF
Bill Word, Vice-Chair Hillsdale Co. Drainage Commission	Joe Draper The Nature Conservancy	Bob Koerner Williams Co., OH farmer	<i>Board positions are open to new and existing partners.</i>	Jane Loomis Executive Director
Jerry Hohla, Treasurer Retired A&L Great Lakes Laboratory	Dan Easterday Hillsdale County, MI farmer	Angie O'Neill Clear Lake Resident		Kevin Breit SWPI Technician
Tom Crowe Allen County SWCD	Martha Ferguson Master Gardener, Landowner	Rodney Renkenberger Maumee River Basin Commission		Tina Puitz Program Support Assistant



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.

Conservation Tillage News

“Getting into the Zone” Field Day, August 30



PHOSPHORUS cont.

- Be responsible for livestock manure and pet waste. Don't allow it to enter the waterways without treatment!
- Properly maintain your septic system. Failing systems leach nutrients into the surface and groundwater, which eventually reaches wells, lakes and streams.

Our region has lost nearly 85% of its natural wetlands. Wetlands can tie up phosphorus and take it out of circulation. Build or protect a wetland! Cost-share funding is available in many areas. Contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District or the US Fish & Wildlife Service for help. ■

You have the opportunity to “get into the zone,” with zone tillage equipment available for rent from the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative and the Allen County SWCD. A one-pass tillage trip in the fall gives you the advantage of planting into a stale seed bed which will mean warmer and dryer soil in the spring. In addition to its agronomic benefits, zone-till and strip-till qualifies you for several conservation programs such as EQIP and CSP, as well as benefiting the environment by reducing soil loss and nutrient movement. Renting the equipment allows you to use it in your farming operation to see the benefits without a large expense to you.

Zone Tillage Equipment Rental



Joseph River Watershed Initiative

Upcoming Events

September 18 *Cedar Creek Stakeholder Meeting*, Eckhart Public Library, Auburn, IN, 6:00 p.m. (See page 3)

September 25 *Twilight Tour of Camp Scott Wetland*, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. For more information call 260-427-1381 (See page 3)

September 26 *E.coli Training*, St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative office, 6:00 p.m. (See page 2)

October 1 *SJRWI Board of Directors Meeting*, DeKalb County Annex Building, Auburn, IN (See page 4)

Other events to note

November 29 *Williams County SWCD annual meeting*, Pioneer, OH at the Pioneer Community Building. For more information call the Williams County SWCD at 419-636-9395.

November 3 *Tri-State Woodland & Wildlife Workshop*, Bryan Middle School, Bryan, OH. Register online at <http://woodlandstewards.osu.edu> or call OSU Extension Williams County at 419-636-5608.

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