Grass Roots for Conservation

www.stormwaterelkco.org Vol. 42 No. 5 May 2017 www.elkcoswcd.org

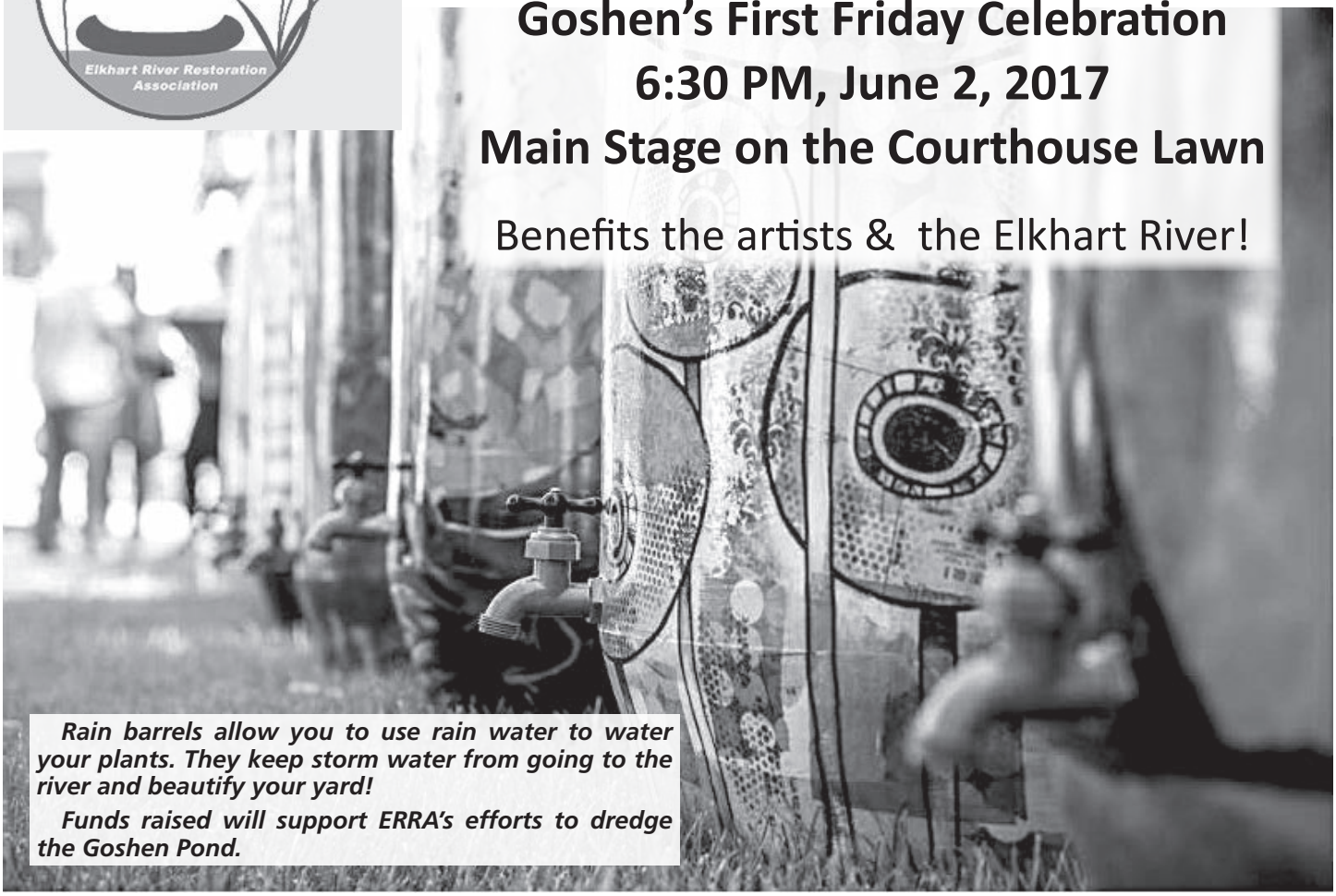
Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District

17746-B County Rd. 34 ~ Goshen, IN 46528 ~ Phone: 574-533-4383 ext. 3 james.hess@in.nacdnet.net

9th Annual ERRA Rain Barrel Auction

Goshen's First Friday Celebration
6:30 PM, June 2, 2017
Main Stage on the Courthouse Lawn

Benefits the artists & the Elkhart River!



Rain barrels allow you to use rain water to water your plants. They keep storm water from going to the river and beautify your yard!

Funds raised will support ERRA's efforts to dredge the Goshen Pond.

Thanks to Superior Body Works for coating the barrels!

Elkhart River Restoration Association, Inc.

www.elkhartriver.org

Email Newsletters Call for Sign Ups

The Elkhart County SWCD wants to keep in contact with you! We have started email newsletters to better communicate with our clients. These newsletters are geared toward three groups of clients: farmers, educators, and contractors. The SWCD wants to send out timely reminders and updates to keep you better informed and aware of our workshops, events, and other opportunities. You won't receive more than one or two emails per month from any one newsletter group – we don't like spam, so we won't spam you with a million emails! Find out how to sign up and more info on each newsletter below. In addition, if you would like to receive our Grass Roots newsletter through email instead of a postal mailing, send an email to lora.callahan@in.nacdnet.net

Elkhart County Farmers E-Newsletter

Get updates about upcoming workshops and events with topics like soil health, cover crops, and grazing. Also learn more and get reminders about grants for implementing conservation practices on your farm. Follow this link and fill out your name and email to be added to the list: **http://bit.ly/ElkCoFarmers**

Elkhart County Contractors: Rule 5 Updates and News

Stay updated on Rule 5 and construction in Elkhart County. Also get timely reminders of site best management practices (BMPs), no more than once or twice a month. Follow this link and fill out your name and email to be added to the list: **http://bit.ly/ElkCoContractors**

Elkhart County EnvironMentor

Learn about incorporating conservation into your curriculum with support, expertise, and tools from the SWCD necessary to engage students in the natural world that surrounds them every day. Our programs and assistance are free of cost to teachers within the county. Follow this link and fill out your name and email to be added to the list: **http://bit.ly/ElkCoEnvironMentor**

Pollinators in Your Yard

Did you realize that every third thing you put in your mouth is the result of a plant or tree being pollinated? Summer melons, soybeans, alfalfa, fruit trees and tomatoes are a few of the foods or crops that depend on this. So it's vital that we have a vibrant and healthy pollinator community to have a vibrant and healthy food production system.

Now-a-days, there is increasing pressure on these important species in many different ways. Changes made by drought, development, eliminating set-aside areas and fencerows and pesticide use are all part of various population declines.

The most common pollinator nationwide is native bees, along with the introduced honey bee. The bumble, digger and sweat bees have a great effect on crops. Different species have varied tongue lengths, so they can overlap territories without competing by utilizing different flowers and plants.

Butterflies and moths are also high on the pollinator list. Butterflies on sunny, windless days use elevations from treetops to shrubs to lower plants seeking nectar sources. Moths generally do their work at night, looking for sweet-smelling, white or pale flowers.

A bird pollinator common in our area is the Ruby-throated hummingbird. Their specialized bills and tongues are made to fit into tubular shaped, brightly-colored flowers. They are an important wildflower pollinator, along with bats and small mammals.

Just like everybody else, pollinators need food, water and shelter. Attracting these important visitors to your yard includes providing nesting sites and food and water sources. One easy way to help is leave some areas "au naturale". Consider spots that are not all tidied up, keeping dead trees and leaf litter on the ground to provide protection from weather and predators. Offering a variety of food sources with plantings of different bloom times, odors, colors and height is a good idea. Some non-native herbs such as mint, oregano and parsley are also appreciated as larva hosts.

Water can be as simple as putting out a flat container or bird bath and keeping it filled. Agricultural lands can easily add pollinator habitat to riparian areas, borders or unused areas without reducing tillable acres. Spray pesticides just after dawn to reduce bee exposure. Choose herbicides that target only the intended weeds and don't eliminate everything. Many of those weeds are food sources for butterfly larva. All these activities benefit pollinators.

The ideal situation would be to offer as many "native" plants as possible. Botanical studies from long-ago give a good idea of what was growing around here in pre-settlement days. These plants co-evolved with the animals, fungi and soil microbes to form a complex network of relationships. Natives were part of the ecosystem that developed to work with the soil, climate, and animals of our area. Because of this system, they take less work to maintain over the long haul. Less needed fertilizer, herbicides and fungicides mean less money input too. That makes beautiful easy-keepers for you and your yard to enjoy for years to come.

Adapted from April Issue of "Grazing Bites"

By: Victor Shelton, NRCS State Agronomist/Grazing Specialist

It is easy to find ourselves trapped in a set of habits or in a redundant pattern that holds us hostage and eats away our time; those are very low value. Every time I find myself doing something with no rhyme or reason. I often ask myself "Why am I doing this?" This is not true about time spent on grazing management.

There are certainly times when it would be much easier to just leave all the gates open and let the livestock manage themselves. Obviously, there must be some merit in this type of management, or lack of, because it is still pretty common. This is especially true in the spring. For those whose primary focus is planting corn and beans, pasture management is usually not a high priority. Equipment, field preparation and planting is the top priority. Unfortunately, by the time most of those producers have completed that work, they are usually short on forages. Hay or other fed feeds now take the place of management or time not expended earlier.

I still often question grazing efficiencies. Certainly not all of the forage that is produced will make it into the animal and likewise, not all of the potential growth is always lost or achieved. Grazing efficiencies have a lot to do with time. Time to grow, time to graze and time to rest. The real trick is to achieve the highest efficiency of the whole. If you let a field grow to its maximum and then harvest it mechanically, you are still missing out on some potential regrowth that did not occur during that timeframe. You then have to account for any loss of leaf and stubble left behind. This is why hay harvest is considered about seventy percent efficient.

If you turn the cows out and let them harvest the field all season long and they are still grazing something green, quite often close to the ground especially with higher stocking rates, you might think you haven't wasted a thing. In reality, because you have restricted photosynthesis and leaf area, you have restricted production and most likely intake of the animal. This is all compounded if it also turns dry.

We actually harvest the most forage over the entire growing season by maintaining as much forage as possible in the growth stage. That is when we maximize intake of the animal, enabling them to get a full bite each time, maximize the nutritional value of that forage, and if we adhere to good stop grazing heights, we will prolong that good growth and possibly even increase new tillering, as long as the weather, moisture, and fertility are present to support it.

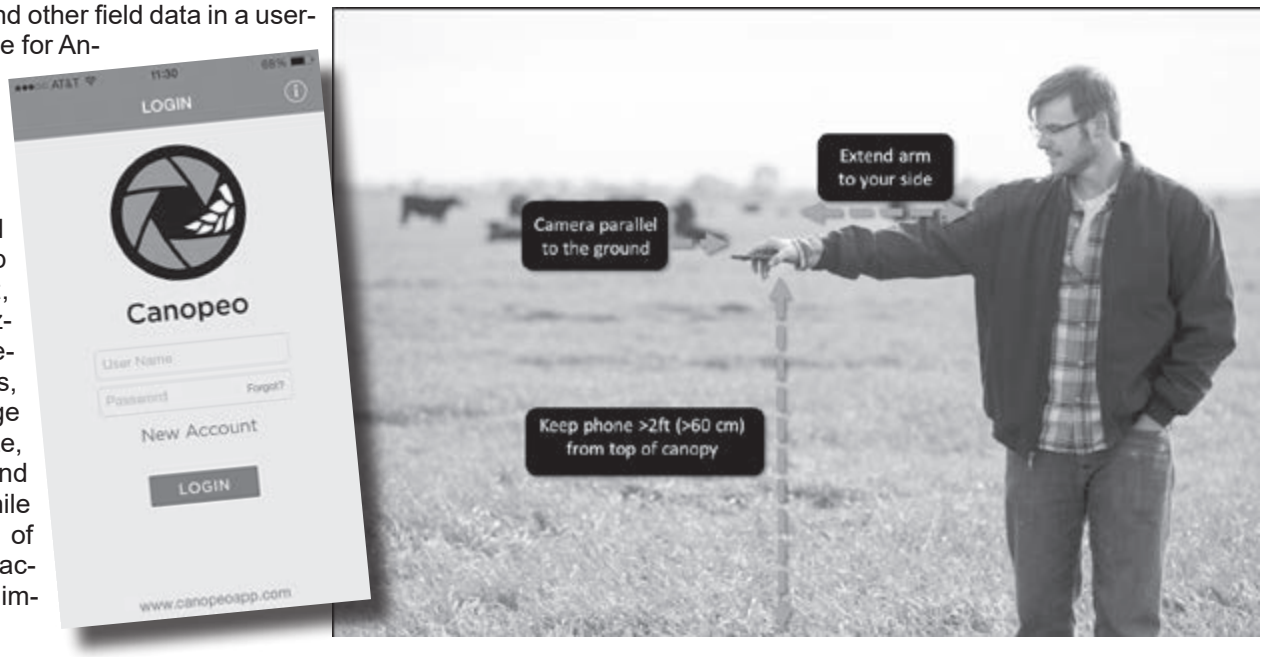
We started this whole discussion with the topic of time, or more specifically the value of it. I continue to test the grazing efficiency percentages. Even with all the variables that influence them, I find them hard to disprove. So, what is the value of time managing pasture? The grazing efficiency of the pasture increases with the increase of time in management. The more often animals are moved and pastures rested and maintained where grazing is maximized in the most ideal stage of growth, the higher the efficiency. You could essentially increase the amount harvested over 200% by adding management to a continuously grazed pasture. That is measurable quantity that you don't have to buy.

If you would like to learn more about rotational grazing and grazing efficiency, keep on the lookout for our grazing field day in June! Date and location will be set soon. We will also be discussing how cover crops can fit into your grazing plan.

Canopeo – A Green Canopy Cover Measurement Tool

Canopeo is a **free** mobile device application (app) that enables anyone with a smartphone to rapidly and accurately quantify green vegetation cover at the land surface. Scientists, crop consultants, and farmers can store images and other field data in a user-friendly interface for Android and iOS/Apple phones. You can use it to monitor crop growth, compare and quantify crop establishment, make grazing management decisions, quantify damage by hail, freeze, pathogens, and drought all while keeping track of your fields by accessing the images and data.

Download today by searching for "Canopeo" on your phone's app store! You can also learn more about how to use the app at http://canopeoapp.com/ or by emailing jordan.beehler@in.nacdnet.net



Grow Grass, Not Algae!

Use Less Fertilizer & Buy Phosphorous Free

www.Clear Choices Clean Water.org

Upcoming Events!

May 22	**SWCD Board Meeting:** 7:00 PM, Purdue Extension Conference Room, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen
June 2017	**Elkhart County SWCD Cover Crop Forage Meeting:** Grazing cover crops, using cover crops as nutrient/ manure management.
June 19	**SWCD Board Meeting:** 7:00 PM, Purdue Extension Conference Room, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen
July 17	**SWCD Board Meeting:** 7:00 PM, Purdue Extension Conference Room, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen
July 18-19	**Worm's Eye View Summer Conference:** Schlipf's Precision Ag, Milford, IN
August 21	**SWCD Board Meeting:** 7:00 PM, Purdue Extension Conference Room, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen
September 7	**Cover Crop Field Day:** Elkhart County SWCD, Goshen, IN
September 18	**SWCD Board Meeting:** 7:00 PM, Purdue Extension Conference Room, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen

SWCD - NRCS CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORY

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