

ELKHART COUNTY SWCD

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

**79th
Annual Meeting**

Thursday, March 4
at 5 pm
via Zoom

59358 CR 7
Elkhart, IN 46517

574-523-2030
www.elkcoswcd.org



LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

To Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District Supporters,
2020, do I need to say more? Actually, it was a great and exciting year for the Elkhart County SWCD despite the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic threw in our path. We did not waiver from our mission. "To assist and educate citizens, land users, and agencies in the wise use of natural resources in Elkhart County." Through your support and participation, and that of our many partners, much has been accomplished. Here are a few highlights of the many things we did this year. We have organized and hosted many meetings, workshops, events and projects most all were done virtually. Our winter seminar "Soak Up Your Resources" focused on cover crop management and was the only in-person event we hosted. We hired a new Conservationist Todd Clark; Todd hit the ground running and has become an invaluable asset to the district. Our other Conservationist Jenna Wait is also a great asset for the District and was invaluable at navigating us through the "tech" side of virtual meetings. Her online education videos she produces are outstanding (check them out on our website). She also graduated from the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy, which on its own is a big deal. Another really big deal for us: we applied for and won, the prestigious Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence in Land Use/Conservation. This highlighted our innovative SWAMP program which puts conversation practices on the land. Including over 12,000 acres of cover crops in 2020. Speaking of big deals, we moved our office to a new location. For a multitude of reasons, we can better serve our customers. Our new address is 59358 County Road 7, Elkhart, IN 46517.

I would like to thank the Elkhart County elected officials for your continued support.

I would also like to thank the SWCD staff, the SWCD Board, NRCS, and all of our partners who contributed to make 2020 a success. Our challenge continues: To provide leadership, education, and implementation of conservation practices, and to utilize and protect our resources to the best of our ability for us and future generations.

To leave it better than we receive it.

Yours for Conservation,



THOMAS KERCHER

SWCD Board Chair

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District is to assist land users and other agencies in the wise use of natural resources in Elkhart County

Elkhart County SWCD

Annual Meeting Minutes February 28, 2019

The 78th annual meeting of the Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District was held in the Martin Room of the ECCC Building, on the Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, in Goshen. 88 people attended. The meeting began at 6:30 pm with Jim Hess welcoming everyone to the meeting. Keith E. Miller gave the invocation. Dinner followed.

Before dinner, Thomas Kercher, Board Chairman introduced Elkhart County SWCD board members, and Government officials present were: Mike Yoder, Elkhart County Commissioner; Dave Hess, Elkhart County Council Member; Amanda Kautz, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Heath Hurst, Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). After dinner Thomas Kercher then introduced the Elkhart County SWCD Associate board members and then introduced the staff. They were acknowledged for their support of the SWCD. Affiliate members were acknowledged for their support.

The minutes of the February 28, 2019 annual meeting were approved on a motion by: Lynn Loucks and Garry Weybright. The motion carried. The 2019 Annual Financial Report was approved on a motion Penny Stroup and Garry Weybright. The motion carried.

Darrell Shover, SWCD board member conducted the supervisor election. He stated the requirements for being a candidate and for voting. He then presented the slate Dale Leer's term of office will expire at the close of this annual meeting, and he has chosen to run for re-election. No nominations were made from the floor. Motion to reelect Dale Leer was approved by Rick Erb and Lynn Loucks.

This year we had Ryan Owen, Wildlife Biologist at Pheasants Forever, he spoke about what his job is and what he is doing with the ACCELL Farm, and that he works closely with NRCS and Amanda Kautz.

Jim Hess, District Manager for the (SWCD) Soil & Water Conservation District spoke about Agriculture and Urban Conservation in Elkhart County, Jenna Wait, Conservationist spoke about Education, Todd Clark our newest employee told us about his family and what he is doing at the SWCD.

Awards were sponsored by the Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District. The Agriculture awards were presented by Dean Rink, and assisted by Supervisors and Associates, Education awards were presented by Dale Leer, and assisted by Supervisors and Associates, Urban awards were presented by Alex Wait, and assisted by Supervisors and Associates, as follows:

County poster contest winners were asked to stand up to be acknowledged. Agri-Business of the Year Award was T & T Fertilizer, Inc. Conservation Farmer of the Year Award was Morehouse Grain Farms, LLC. Educator of the Year Award was ACCELL Farm. River Friendly Farmer Award was Oneeda Farms. Urban Conservationist of the Year Award was Andy Knox, and Friend of the SWCD went to Ryan Owen.

Darrell Shover, SWCD Supervisor announced that Dale Leer was elected to a three-year term. The Oath of Office was administered by Elkhart County Commissioner, Mike Yoder to Dale Leer, and the reappointment of Supervisor, Dean Rink.

The meeting adjourned by Board Chairman, Thomas Kercher, at 8:30 pm

TOM KERCHER

Board Chairman

ALEX WAIT

Vice Chairman

DALE LEER

Board Member

DEAN RINK

Board Member

DARRELL SHOVER

Board Member

LORA L. ATKINS

Secretary

2020 Conservation Highlights Featured at 79th Annual Meeting

The 79th Annual Meeting of the Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will be held on **Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 5 pm via Zoom**. We will highlight the conservationists and conservation activities in Elkhart County that contributed to conservation in 2020. There is no fee to attend, but reservations are requested, and donations or affiliate memberships are accepted. This Annual Meeting provides the District with an opportunity to share activities and provide a financial accounting of the year. We will recognize the adults and youth who have advanced conservation efforts in the county in 2020. A preview of those receiving recognition is available in this report.

As 2020 is our 79th anniversary we are looking back and reflecting on how we got where we are and the importance of each partnership that worked together to get us here. As we remember the past, we also look to the future to continue to build a legacy of conservation for generations and generations to come. An important item on the agenda is the election of a member to the Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Every county in Indiana has a Soil and Water Conservation District. Each District is supervised by a board of local landowners who are responsible for the policies and programs of the SWCD. This board has five members; two are appointed for three-year terms and three are elected for three-year terms. Dean Rink was appointed to his term which will expire in two years. Darrell Shover holds the other appointed position and that term will expire this year. The elected positions are staggered, with one elected supervisor's term expiring each year. Alex Wait has one year remaining in his term of office and Dale Leer has two. Tom Kerchers term of office will expire at the close of this annual meeting, and he has agreed to run for re-election.

Nominations can be made from the floor by anyone eligible to vote in the election.

Anyone who attends the Annual Meeting, is of legal voting age, and occupies land in Elkhart County is eligible to vote in this SWCD supervisor election. An individual may also vote if they attend; are of legal voting age; and represent a firm, company, or corporation that occupies land located within Elkhart County. Eligible individuals include the owner and tenant of the same land; as well as any owner's or tenant's spouse.

If you are interested in supporting the SWCD with an affiliate membership, you can be recognized at our 79th annual meeting. Individual/family affiliate memberships are available for a donation of \$25 or more. Your membership will be recognized at least twice a year in our monthly newsletter Grass Roots, and during the slide show at the annual meeting. Second tier or business memberships are available for an annual donation of \$125 or more. Second tier membership guarantees at least two business card sized ads in our monthly newsletter Grass Roots and recognition at our 79th Annual Meeting during the slide show.

Make your reservations for the 79th annual meeting of the Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District by calling (574) 523-2030.

EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

I think we can all agree that 2020 was a tough year, education suffered greatly to say the least. When social distancing restrictions were put into place, our education efforts had to make a drastic turn too. The content that normally would be brought to events and into the classroom had to somehow be available virtually in people's own homes. Along came the videos. Expanding upon the Conservation Education Library, I was able to add lesson plans and videos to go with them. The Conservation Education Library is free and available on our website www.elkcoswcd.org to anyone.

On top of the library, we were also able to host another Indiana Master Naturalist course. We had a total of 17 students who took eight classes each of which related to a different natural resource including geology, water, animals, and plants. After passing the class, each of the students will have to complete 24 hours of volunteer service in natural resources before receiving their official title of Indiana Master Naturalist.

When push comes to shove, the Elkhart County SWCD is here for the community. Our goal is to be a resource for our community educators. Despite the challenges of 2020, we were able to reach 50956 people through our education efforts. In the next year we want to continue moving forward with our education efforts within the county. If you would like to stay up to date on our education efforts, please follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or sign up for our educator's emails. Contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely your Conservationist,

Jenna Wait



STATE OF STORMWATER



Looking back at the year 2020, it seemed like a year with so much promise. The economy was hitting all-time highs, companies were looking to expand, and homes were selling at a breakneck pace. Unfortunately, that all came to a screeching halt through the months of March and April. Companies were sending workers home, restaurants were closing their doors, and hospitals were facing supply shortages that nobody could have predicted. Things were bleak.

In an effort to remain focused on my job and continue to be productive, I stayed away from the office and put all of my efforts into inspecting jobsites. To my surprise, construction was continuing all over the county! Very few sites had closed down, and the ones that closed down only stayed that way for a very short time. After that, the county rebounded and came back stronger than before! Plans rolled in for review daily and projects that were on pause fired back up and Elkhart County was back in business. Things were not so bleak.

As we finished the year, our usual way of working with engineers, contractors, and landowners shifted from a large group, in person focus to a more one on one, virtual approach. Our methods have moved into a more 2020 format, but our message has staunchly remained the same. We are providing information and education to all 3 phases of the construction industry. I pride myself on the relationships that I have built with the many people that are continuing to build Elkhart County into the thriving community that it is. Things look promising!

As we transition into the 2021, I am filled with more optimism than ever as I am predicting more growth than any of the previous 3 years. I have worked toward strengthening our relationship with the various municipalities in the county and look forward to a more unified approach in our continued effort to make Elkhart County a place companies want to develop, land-users want to farm, and families want to build homes in. I hope to see you all out there this year and can't wait to see the results of our efforts to manage stormwater!

Judd M Clark

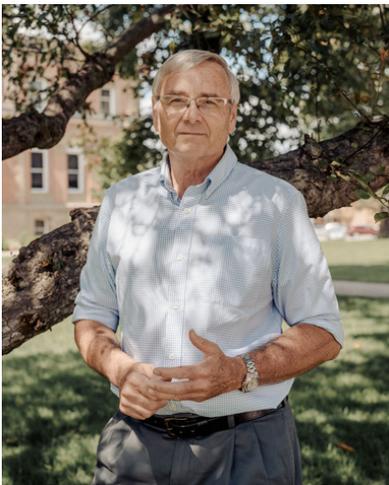
Urban Conservationist of the Year: Tony Harman

In a year that was difficult in almost every aspect, the construction industry in Elkhart County did not miss a beat. Projects continued to move forward and, all be it at a limited capacity, the SWCD's commitment to providing assistance to contractors on erosion control issues moved forward as well. When it came to selecting the Urban Conservationist of the year there were several people that came to mind, but Tony Harmon really stood out. Tony has worked for J.A. Wagner since 2012 as a project manager. From the beginning to the end of a project, Tony builds trust with his clients with clear and constant communication. Tony is also in regular communication with the SWCD ensuring that the plans and follow through on the erosion control aspect of the project are within the guidelines set forth by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). When Tony takes on a project, he is driven to get it completed with the best quality and attention to detail. The Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District would like to Thank Tony for his commitment to urban conservation and we look forward to working with him in the future to keep our waterways clean.



2020 AWARD RECIPIENTS

2020 Friend of the SWCD: Mike Yoder



When it comes to being a friend of the SWCD, Mike Yoder stands out as one of the best. He grew up on a dairy farm in Middlebury where he eventually started his own dairy operation. Mike served the community for 16 years as Elkhart County Commissioner where he supported the Elkhart County SWCD in their conservation efforts. Mike helped reinforce and support the importance of conservation in the community by supporting the SWAMP program, urban conservation programs, along with all the education efforts within the SWCD. Before being elected County Commissioner, Mike served in a variety of leadership roles in both local and state agricultural organizations. Mike has recently accepted the position of Bristol Town Manager and continues to be involved in community organizations serving on the board of the Economic Development Corporation and Oaklawn. Mike is also a founding board member of the Wood Land and Lakes RC&D Land Trust, currently serving as president. Thank you Mike for being such a good steward to the community and the Elkhart County SWCD.

Conservation farmer of the Year: Woodsbrook Farms Inc.

The Elkhart County SWCD Conservation Farmer of the Year is Craig, Jessica, and Michelle Blough, Woodsbrook Farms Inc. The Blough's farming operation consists of corn, hay and livestock. In recent years they have implemented many conservation practices including: no-till, cover crops, rotational grazing, pollinator strips, exclusion fencing, buffer strips, grassed waterways, sediment control basins, and a manure management storage facility. They also follow nutrient & pest management plans to optimize fertilizer & herbicide applications, using the smallest amount possible to get maximum results. The Blough's have been affiliates of the SWCD for many years and have been involved with many of the SWCD's field days and activities throughout the years. All of these conservation practices allow the Blough's to be an efficient farm while building soil health and fertility and protecting the waterways in Elkhart County. Craig, Jessica, and Michelle encourage others to implement conservation practices around the county. The Elkhart County SWCD thanks Woodsbrook Farms Inc. for being a good steward of the land.



Educator of the Year: Krista Daniels

Krista Daniels is the 2020 Educator of the Year award recipient. She is an inspiring educator who is passionate about the work she does as a naturalist. Growing up she was outside more than she was inside and that has carried over into her career as a naturalist. She was always exploring the creek and woods next door, learning as she played. She received a Bachelor of Art degree in biology with a minor in environmental studies from Goshen College. Following graduation, she did a 1-year internship at Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center. For the last 19 years she has been working as an Interpretive Naturalist with the Elkhart County Parks. Wherever Krista goes, whether it be in the office, an event, or education program, she brings with her an energy that is contagious. Her level headed nature makes her a great educator, but it is her passion and excitement for the little things that makes her rise to the top as an educator.



River Friendly Farmer of the Year: Stoney-M Farms

In these days of water quality concerns, there are those that are utilizing conservation practices on their farms that are protecting waterways and water quality in Indiana and beyond. In Elkhart County, Ernest Miller, Stoney-M Farms of Middlebury is among 31 farmers who received the statewide award of 'River-Friendly Farmer.' This award, hosted by the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD), recognizes landowners and farmers in the state of Indiana for the work they do on their land to protect Indiana's natural resources. The Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District nominated Stoney-M Farms for the award based upon their farm management practices. Some of the conservation practices that are used on the miller farm are Mulch till, Conservation crop rotations, Nutrient and Pest management plans, and Cover cropping. The livestock conservation practices that are being used are pasture renovation, rotational grazing, exclusion fencing, watering systems, and heavy use areas.



SWAMP

The Storm Water Alliance Management Program (SWAMP) was established to provide financial assistance to landowners to help implement conservation practices that reduce non-point source water pollution, especially sediment erosion, into waterways in Elkhart County. SWAMP is a cost-share program assisting with up to 75% of the total cost of the project. It is administered by the Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Elkhart County Surveyor. The program includes practices such as blind inlets, cover crops, filter Strips, grade stabilization structures, grassed waterways, and exclusion fencing.



Through this cost share program, there were 67 participants who planted 12,099.72 acres of cover crops in 2020. There were also 7 acres of grassed waterways installed in critical areas and 2 acres of filter strips that were constructed on stream banks. All of these best management practices (BMP's) will help reduce the amount of sediment entering local ditches.

In 2020 the SWAMP program was honored to receive the prestigious Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence in Land Use/Conservation.



2020 Annual Financial Report

Form approved by State Board of Accounts,
2002

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT OF
Elkhart COUNTY SWCD
January 1, 2020 through
December 31, 2020

File with State Board of
Accounts by February 29, 2021
(via Gateway) and with your
ISDA District Support Specialist
by March 31, 2021.

Balance Brought Forward	\$61,789.86
RECEIPTS	
State for District Operations	\$10,000.00
Clean Water Indiana Grant	\$0.00
County for District Operations	\$0.00
Federal and State Funds (not CWI)	\$0.00
Non Government Grants	\$0.00
Other Grants (List)	\$0.00
Total Intergovernmental Receipts	\$10,000.00
Equipment Rental & Farm Income	\$0.00
Donations & Memberships	\$1,945.00
Other Charges for Services (Example, Rule 5 inspections)	\$0.00
Other Charges for Services (Describe)	\$0.00
Other Charges for Services (Describe)	\$0.00
Total Charges for Services	\$1,945.00
Advertising	\$0.00
Annual Meeting Income	\$0.00
Interest from Checking, CDs, Savings, Etc.	\$81.41
Reimbursements & Refunds (<i>From County Government</i>)	\$10,825.44
Sale of Used Equipment	\$0.00
Sales Income	\$11,426.54
Workshop/Field Day Income	\$6,475.00
Other Miscellaneous Revenue (Describe)	\$0.00
Other Miscellaneous Revenue (Describe)	\$0.00
Other Miscellaneous Revenue (<i>Void - Check 4736</i>) Dated 1/10/2018	\$32.99
Total Miscellaneous Revenue	\$28,841.38
Sub-Total (before investment activity)	\$40,786.38
Sale of Investments (CDs, saving accounts, transfers)	\$0.00
TOTAL (balance forward + receipts + investments)	\$102,576.24
DISBURSEMENTS	
Capital Outlays (<i>Equipment & Furniture</i>)	\$1,716.96
Annual Meeting Expenses	\$1,822.86
Audit Expense	\$150.00
Bonding and Liability Insurance	\$0.00
Clean Water Indiana Projects or other State grant funded projects	\$0.00
Conservation Education Programs	\$985.80
Contractual Services	\$0.00
Cost-Share Projects/Federally-Funded	\$0.00
Cost-Share Projects/SWCD-Funded	\$0.00
CWI Payments to other SWCDs	\$0.00
Dues & Subscriptions	\$3,005.00
Employee Salaries Paid by District	\$0.00
Office Supplies (<i>And Other Supplies</i>)	\$2,216.89
Other Services & Charges	\$300.45
Postage & Delivery Expenses	\$0.00
Printing/Copying Expense	\$0.00
Rent	\$0.00
Repair Expenses (<i>Project Supplies/Special Projects</i>)	\$554.40
Sales Tax Paid to IN Dept. of Revenue	\$810.62
Supervisor Per Diem	\$0.00
Supplies for Resale (<i>2020 Plat Books/USB Drives</i>)	\$3,335.42
Telephone or Other Utilities	\$0.00
Travel/Lodging/Mileage/Registration/Meals	\$3,567.72
Workshop/Field Day Expense	\$5,598.57
Other Disbursements (<i>2020 Tree Sale Cancellation + Expenses</i>)	\$9,899.60
Other Disbursements (<i>IMN Class Reimbursement</i>)	\$1,745.00
Other Disbursements (<i>Credit Card Fee - Square</i>)	\$301.32
Other Disbursements (Describe)	\$0.00
Total General Government Disbursements	\$36,010.61
Sub-Total (before investment activity)	\$36,010.61
Purchase of Investments (CDs saving accounts, transfers)	\$0.00
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS (disbursements + investments)	\$36,010.61
BALANCE AT DECEMBER 31	\$66,565.63
CLAIMS PAID BY COUNTY	
Salaries	\$194,574.66
Fringe	\$110,881.39
Other	\$34,618.27
INVESTMENT INVENTORY	
Beginning Investments	\$70,420.89
Ending Investments	\$70,562.31
Change (+/-)	\$141.42
CASH BOXES	
Petty Cash	\$0.00
Cash Change	\$35.00

CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORY

SWCD Staff

Jim Hess, District Manager; Lora L. Atkins, Secretary
Todd Clark, Conservationist; Jenna Wait, Conservationist

Board of Supervisors

Tom Kercher, Chairman; Alex Wait, Vice Chairman
Dale Leer, Dean Rink, Darrell Shover

Associate Supervisors

David Bontrager, Joe Brown, Brian Campbell, Gary Kauffman, Keith E. Miller

NRCS Staff

Wes Krug, District Conservationist

FSA Staff

Claire Larson, County Executive Director
Jenny Brosius, Program Technician, Angi Keim, Program Technician

Elkhart County Purdue Extension Staff

Robert Kelly, County Extension Director; Nancy Borkholder, Secretary; Jeff Burbrink, Extension Educator;
Brandy Cavanagh, Office Manager; Jennifer Fink, Secretary; Sthele Greybar, Extension Educator;
Susan Stine, Secretary



Jim Hess



Lora Atkins



Todd Clark



Jenna Wait



Top Row left to right: Darrell Shover, Tom Kercher, Alex Wait
Bottom Row Left to Right: Dean Rink, Keith Miller, Dale Leer

Thank you to all of our 2020 Affiliate Members

Aquatic Weed Control (Jim Donahoe)
B & A Reed Farms, LLC (Brent & Ashley Reed)
Bontrager, David
Brookview Farms Partnership (Richard Brookins)
Brown, Joe & Nancy
Burtsfield & Erb Farms, LLC (Rick & Jill Erb)
D2 Land & Water Resource (Al McAuliffe)
Elkhart County Farm Bureau, Inc (Lynn Loucks) *
Garber, James & Peggy
Hibschman, Joe & Donna
Hilbish, Norma
Himes, Stephen
Hinds, Mike *
Keeling, Cyndy
Kuert Concrete, Inc. (Steve Fidler) *
Lar-Lee Farms (Rick Yontz)
Leer, Dale & Ruby
Lo-Ke Dairy (Keith E. Miller)
Loucks, Lynn & Carol
Marbach, Brady, Weaver, Inc. (Chris F. Marbach) *

Morehouse Grain Farms, LLC (Matt Morehouse)
Neff, David & Luann
Neff, Mike & Annette
Nutritional Blending, Inc. (Tom Moneyheffer)
Perry, Tom & Mazzaferri, Gina
Pine Crest Farms, Inc. (Stan & Elvera Miller)
Rink, Dean & Kate
Roush, Marvin & Judy
Snider, Rich & Sue
Stroup, Martin & Penny
Sunrise Orchards, Inc. (Tom & Maureen Kercher)
Sweet Corn Charlie Produce, LLC (Chuck & Tami Mohler) *
The Farmer's Exchange (Matt Yeater) *
Wait, Jack & Nancy
Wakarusa Sawmill, Inc. (Steve & Annette Brown)
Wenger, Tina
Weybright, Garry & Linda
Woodsbrook Farm (Blough, Michelle)
Zell, Bob & Laura
* Second Tier/Business Membership



There is still time to renew your membership for 2021, or to become a new supporter of conservation in Elkhart County. The Elkhart County SWCD is again offering two tiers of Affiliate Membership. The first tier or individual membership is an annual donation of \$25 or more. Your membership will be recognized at least twice a year in our monthly newsletter Grass Roots. The second tier or business membership guarantees at least two business card sized ads in our monthly newsletter Grass Roots and recognition at our Annual Meeting by way of a slide show. Second tier membership has an annual donation of \$125 or more.

If you wish to become an Affiliate Member, you can mail a check or money order to:

Elkhart County SWCD, 59358 County Road 7, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Be sure to include your name as you would like it to appear in the upcoming editions of Grass Roots, and your full mailing address. For further information, contact the new SWCD office at (574) 523-2030.