



Grass Roots for Conservation



Vol. 45

No. 4

April 2020

www.elkcoswcd.org

Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District

17746 County Rd. 34, Ste. B ~ Goshen, IN 46528 ~ Phone: (574) 533-4383 ext. 3 – jhess@elkhartcounty.com

SWCD Office BMP

As we navigate through these uncertain times we learn what works and what doesn't work, much like you at home are doing. I am watching my 2 daughters change their routine and how their daily operations work. They are doing activities that they have not done before and are suggesting new and improved ideas. We can all learn from these times and use it as good checks and balances, not only for our personal lives but what we have around us. We have so much to be thankful for and please take this opportunity to reflect and look at the nature and what it has to offer. Our land, streams, woods, and plants all play a part of our daily lives. Use this time to look, think, and create new opportunities that help build the resilience in your return on investment.



The office has had to make some changes on how we operate. It's not bad it's just different. We want everyone to be safe and well protected but at the end of the day operations still have to go on. We reevaluate where our priorities are and what options we have to continue on our mission. That 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. So how do we operate now with the threat of COVID-19? We use the resources we have been given and make the best of any situation. All schools have gone to e-learning, Jenna has worked at getting all our material on line and available to teachers at a click of a button. We are able to run on-line classroom activities and show examples by video. Todd is continuing to inspect our Rule 5 sites and we are accepting SWPPP plans digitally. This minimizes the amount of foot traffic coming in the office and helps accelerate the approval process. All of our services and programs are still in effect. As of right now the dates of our events have been postponed or canceled. Please watch our website or facebook for any changes or updates. Please everyone stay strong, courageous, and healthy as we move through these uncertain times, and create your own best management practice.

— Jim Hess, District Manager

15th Annual Elkhart County SWCD/Michiana Master Gardener Tree Seedling Sale

Saturday, April 18, 2020 • 9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, She... Sw... er...

Qu... 10" ... ed ... Fe... g M... e In... & A... S...

Last chance to purchase seedlings this year available while supplies last

American Arborvitae	Eastern White Pine	2.00	Flowering Dogwood	20.00
American Beech	Hawthorn	2.00	Japanese Maple	30.00
Arbutus	Norway Spruce	22.00	Red Cherry	30.00
Black Locust	Norway Spruce	22.00	# Variety Pack - 1 each	20.00
Eastern Redbud	Tulip Poplar*	18.00		

* Native to Indiana

Beautify Your Landscape - Go Green for less!
For more information: Call the Elkhart County SWCD at: (574) 533-4383, ext 3



The Elkhart County SWCD has been working hard to keep up with the changes in the education system.

As you may know, many of our local schools are relying on e-learning for the rest of the school year. To adapt to this change, we have started to create short educational videos.

The videos are loaded with information about soil and water and most of the videos have activities that students can do at home. It is our goal to have students learning at the touch of a button.

We also have many other resources on our website such as PowerPoints and lesson plans. Although the current crisis has sparked this web based learning, we hope that this is something that will continue to be used for years to come.

To view our resources, please visit elkcoswcd.org and look under the tab "Education".

If you have questions please contact Jenna Wait at jwait@elkhartcounty.com

Conservation Stewardship Program: Application Deadline June 1st

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of Indiana is now accepting applications for enrollment in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the nation's largest conservation program. While applications are accepted year-round, interested producers should submit applications to their local NRCS office by June 1st to be considered for the 2020 funding period.

CSP is a Farm Bill Program for producers who are already established conservation stewards and who want to add more conservation benefits on their land, such as improved water and soil quality and enhanced wildlife habitat. Through CSP, agricultural producers and forest landowners earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, ecologically-based pest management, buffer strips, and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat—all while maintaining active agriculture production on their land. CSP also encourages the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and management techniques, such as precision agriculture applications and on-site carbon storage and planting for high carbon sequestration rate, and soil amendments to improve water quality.

CSP is for private working lands including cropland, pastureland, nonindustrial private forest land and agricultural land. Agricultural producers wanting to enhance current conservation efforts on their land are encouraged to apply.

Information about CSP, including national and state ranking questions and enhancement descriptions, is available at www.nrcs.usda.gov/csp. This one-stop shop, which provides information to help individuals determine whether CSP is right for them, will be continually updated as more information becomes available. If you are interested in applying or have questions about the program, please contact Amanda Kautz, District Conservationist, at (574) 533-4383 Ext. 3.

UPCOMING FSA DEADLINES

June 30th: 2020 ARCPLC Signup Deadline

July 15th: Acreage Reporting Deadline

USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only. While our staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with our producers by phone and using email and online tools whenever possible.

Please contact the Elkhart County FSA and NRCS service center by phone (574) 533-4383, ext 2 to schedule time for program services or with any questions.

Thank you and have a safe planting season!

BLOGGING BMPs

A monthly Blog discussing the Best Management Practices (BMPs) that must be used to aid in erosion and sediment control



Welcome to the first edition of Blogging BMPs where we discuss the various best management practices used on construction sites both Urban and Rural. My name is Todd Clark and I am a conservationist for the Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District. My job encompasses many things, but at the core of all that I do is education and community outreach. The intention of this blog is going to be more than just giving you information that you may or may not already know, it is going to be a conversation starter about the many ways that sediment reaches our waterways and the best practices that will prevent this from happening. So here we go!

Social Distancing! This is a term that only in the last couple of months Americans have become all too familiar with. Just like many of you, I've had to make changes both at home and at work. I am not complaining, for me this is an opportunity to creatively figure out ways to be more efficient and function independently. Fortunately, a piece of what I do includes job site inspections around the entire county. I do not need to get within 6 feet of anyone to perform this task, and there are over 170 open construction sites in Elkhart County so you can imagine the opportunity to stay busy in this strange time is abundant.

This month has brought something to my attention that most people probably have never thought about, but is a real issue. What happens to the concrete that is left over after the cement truck finishes dumping on the site? Well, I have noticed that what is supposed to happen and what actually happens are usually not one and the same.

What SHOULD Happen

A concrete washout system should be constructed on any job site that will pour concrete. This applies to the largest urban project all the way down to the poultry barn and new garage project. This area must be maintained throughout the duration of the project. When no more concrete work is required, the washout may be removed and all solidified concrete must be disposed of legally. Once that is done, the area should be backfilled, graded and stabilized. Note: you may be creative here, just make sure the washout is collected and disposed of legally.



I could give you dozens of pictures of what should not happen, but this blog is not about showing the problem, rather it is about finding the solution. If you are having concrete poured, provide the driver a place to washout legally. If you are a driver, find out where you are supposed to washout. If you are not sure how to properly manage cement or its disposal, please visit our website www.elkcoswcd.org and click on the Rule 5 link. If you go to temporary and permanent site stabilization there will be a link to the IDEM stormwater manual which contains directives on all BMPs including concrete washouts. If you would like to reach me with any questions, comments, or ideas for future topics please send an email to tclark@elkhartcounty.com. Until next month, remember that if it goes in the creek, something will drink it next week!

Q. Are earth worms an indicator of a healthy, productive soil? Is there a worm count per acre that is considered optimal, and is it possible to increase worm numbers? I have no-tilled 5 years, which I understand is a benefit for worms.



Send your questions to Walden the Worm

The "Dear Abby" of conservation farming!

A. Walden here. This is a topic that deserves great consideration and explanation, so my reply will be split into two articles. Yes, worms are a very good indicator of a productive, nutrient cycling soil. I have stated many times that my fellow worms and I are important and hard workers for you, Mr. Farmer. Worms are needed for a soil to function effectively. In a soil pit, soil scientists will look for worm channels from the small shallow dwelling worms and deep burrows of the night crawler. The many burrows and channels allow air and water into the soil and are fertile roadways for crop roots to rapidly travel. We earthworms also decompose and incorporate residue into the soil, creating organic matter. This organic matter helps to create soil structure, infiltrate water, and hold water for dry times, among many other things.

Is there an optimal number of worms per acre? That is hard to answer because of the variations in the number of worms throughout the field and between fields, due to differences in moisture, temperature, and soil texture. The type of crops grown and how the field is managed also play a role. However, a general rule of thumb is that 10 or more earthworms per square foot are considered good number in crop fields. With some study you will be able to determine a likely optimal worm count for your soil and cropping system. Worm counts should be done in spring or fall with the soil damp and soil temps 47° F or above, but not hot. A simple count is to thrust a shovel into your field in several locations. Each shovel of soil should have one or more worms. That is a good starting point. The more worms your shovel holds on average, the healthier and more productive your soil is.

If your soil is sand that freely flows through your fingers, expect to find no large night crawlers. My skin is thin and sensitive. I cannot work those abrasive soils, nor can you, Mr. Farmer, work in pants made of sandpaper! Also, keep in mind, worms like me prefer cooler and wetter soils, especially during the heat of summer. The drier and hotter the soil, the less likely I am to be living there. My fellow worms and I prefer soils at a temperature of 60-80° F. At temperatures above this range, we are likely to stop work and curl up deep in the soil to escape the heat. Adding organic matter to your soil will help with all these issues, and we will discuss that next month.

Keep an eye out for May's edition of *Grass Roots* for more information on how to count worms and the best ways to increase worm numbers in your fields!

Until next month,
— Walden

UPCOMING EVENTS!

- April 20 SWCD Board Meeting:** 5:30 PM, SWCD Office, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen
- May 18 SWCD Board Meeting:** 5:30 PM, SWCD Office, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen
- May 25 Memorial Day Holiday:** The SWCD & NRCS Offices will be closed for the Memorial Day Holiday
- June 1 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Deadline:** See Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) with any questions...
- June 15 SWCD Board Meeting:** 5:30 PM, SWCD Office, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen
- July 15 Crop Certification Deadline:** See Farm Service Agency (FSA) with any questions...

SWCD - NRCS CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORY

17746 County Road 34, Ste. B, Goshen, IN 46528-9261
Ph. (574) 533-4383, ext. 3
www.elkcoswcd.org

Printed on paper produced using conservation practices consistent with the Forest Stewardship Council.

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

SWCD Staff:

James Hess, District Manager Todd Clark, Conservationist
Lora L. Atkins, Secretary/Treasurer Jenna Wait, Conservationist

NRCS Staff:

Amanda Kautz, District Conservationist

All programs and services of the Conservation Partnership and the Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.