



Grass Roots for Conservation



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Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District

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WALDEN'S ROADSHOW



*A worm's eye view of
conservation practices in
Elkhart County*

**COMING
SOON IN
SEPTEMBER
& OCTOBER**

The Elkhart County SWCD is offering up a pathway for Walden and his featured guests to get between the rows and learn more about:

- How healthy is your soil
- What cover crops work for you
- How to seed your cover crops
- Weather trends and patterns
- Importance of water infiltration
- Cover crops and manure applications
- Capturing the sun and energy through plants
- Working with nature rather than against it
- Value of programs and what they have to offer
- Your return on investment

Featured guests include but not limited to (Hans Kok, Tom Coomes, Stephanie McClain, Fred Whitford, local agronomists, and area seed reps)

**INTERESTED
IN ATTENDING?**

*call (574) 523-2030
or email latkins@elkhartcounty.com
or visit www.elkcoswcd.org*

FARMERS, HOMEOWNERS CAN HELP POLLINATORS PROSPER

Why are pollinators so important? That's easy - Food. One out of three bites of food can be attributed to these important creatures – such as bees, butterflies, moths, birds, beetles, bats, and a few other small mammals. Pollinators provide crucial assistance to fruit, vegetable and seed crops as well as other plants that produce fiber, medicine and fuel. For many plants, without the help of pollinators, they would be unable to reproduce.

But as you may know, pollinators are in trouble. Many are seeing decreasing populations because of habitat loss, disease, parasites and pesticide use. But there's good news. There are simple ways you can help. It can be as easy as selecting high-quality pollinator plants for your garden. To find the best plants for your area, visit the websites of NRCS partners at the Xerces Society Pollinator Conservation Program or Pollinator Partnership.

If you operate a farm or ranch, NRCS can help you create habitat for pollinators. This not only benefits pollinators, but also provides ample perks for the farmers and ranchers, too. More pollinators can increase crop yields. Pollinators can be increased by planting wildflowers in and around fields and choosing the right cover crops. NRCS offers more than three dozen conservation practices that assist in building healthier landscapes for pollinators. NRCS can also help fund the implementation of these practices.

Habitats used by pollinators attract beneficial insects (insects that eat crop pests), and they may provide habitat for other wildlife, reduce soil erosion, and improve water quality. As you can see, pollinators and healthy habitat for pollinators help keep the ecosystem healthy. In fact, if you are putting in conservation practices to prevent soil erosion or protect stream banks, consider including wildflowers, shrubs and trees that support pollinators.

Anyone looking to close your old animal waste facilities please call NRCS for possible EQIP financial assistance.

For more information, contact your District Conservationist (Wes Krug) at the Elkhart County USDA Service Center at (574) 533-4383, ext 3 or visit nrcs.usda.gov/pollinators.




WHAT A FUN DAY!

The Elkhart County SWCD spent Saturday, August 7 at Meet Me on Island Park; a family-friendly, environmentally-themed event. There were activity booths, food vendors, a raffle and silent auction, a kids area and Memphis Underground played for the duration of the event.

The SWCD had Indiana Master Naturalist volunteers help run the booth, which had a macro invertebrate pool where people could come dip and see what they find.

Next year, we hope to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Envirofest, a larger version of Meet Me on Island Park. We hope to see you there!



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BLOGGING BMP'S

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

Welcome back to another edition of Blogging BMP's. It's that time of year again when all of the events of summer start to wind down and our focus goes from fairs, family and fun to farming, factories and football in the blink of an eye. The kids are heading back to school and the adults are struggling to get back into the routine that seemed so easy back in late May. For me, the summer is the busy season so I am looking forward to the cooler weather and the frenetic pace that the construction industry has to slow up a bit.

Speaking of weather, I have an interesting statistic I would like to discuss. August is the wettest month of the year in Elkhart county with an average of 4.3 inches of rain in the month, annually. What is crazy is that August also has fewer rainy days, on average, than any other month other than September, annually. How can this be you ask? Well, August is filled with shorter, more intense rain events that come fast and furious. It is not abnormal to get two or three rain events and have more than 5 inches of rain. August is also the second warmest month of the year creating a rapid evaporation rate that often leaves you wondering if it even rained 30 minutes after a gully washer rolls through. Fast rain + fast evaporation + several days between rains = dry surface soils. So what BMP could possible relate to this phenomenon. Try not to laugh, but fugitive dust emissions are a real thing, and now is the time that they make their break from the the confinements of a field or construction site whenever heavy equipment passes over them.

According to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, or IDEM, fugitive dust means "the generation of particulate matter to the extent that some portion of the material escapes beyond the property line or boundaries of the property, right-of-way, or easement on which the source is located." Fugitive dust includes fine particles that become airborne from a variety of common activities, including but not limited to construction, commercial mining, demolition, and soil erosion from wind. Fugitive dust does not include fine particles that originate from a stack, vent, or chimney.

The state rules on fugitive dust, which apply to all sources of dust (particulate matter), are found in the Indiana Administrative Code at 326 IAC 6. A source is considered to be generating fugitive dust if the dust is visible crossing the property line at or near ground level. For sources to comply with fugitive dust rules, prevention measures may be required.



However, under 326 IAC 6-4-6 certain activities are exempt from the fugitive dust rule. Common examples include dust from agricultural, construction, or demolition activities providing every reasonable precaution has been taken to minimize dust; as well as dust from publicly maintained unpaved roads where a nuisance or health hazard is not being created.

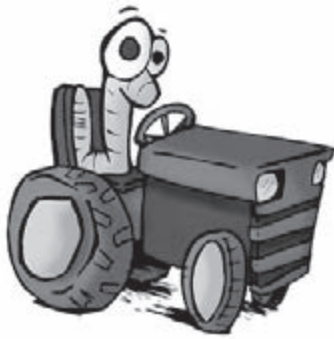
So how do you prevent or suppress these fugitive particles?

- The simplest solution is to apply water to the dust, but that can create an unwanted slurry that travels on tires.
- The most realistic solution is to have heavy equipment slow down when driving on roads or lots that are not paved
- When all else fails, use an approved dust suppressant that will hold the particles down and will not travel with tires.

A list of these approved suppressants can be found at

<https://www.in.gov/idem/aircompliance/fugitive-dust/dust-suppressants/> .

As with all BMPs, it is not a one size fits all situation so take the time to figure out what is the best solution for your particle issue. For more information on this topic visit <https://www.in.gov/idem/aircompliance/>



Send your questions to Walden the Worm

The "Dear Abby" of conservation farming!

Walden here,

I need to correct a typo from the July Grass Roots. When explaining why high carbon soil organic matter/soils are more drought resistant than sandy soils, I used the word absorb each time. The word adsorb applies to sandy soils. The July paper should read; Organic matter will absorb water the same way a paper towel or sponge will. To absorb is to engross completely and occupy wholly. The mineral portion of soil will only adsorb water. Meaning water is held only on an outer surface, as is the case with playground sand.

Sorry – Walden

UPCOMING EVENTS

- August 28 Middlebury RiverFest and the Regatta of Recyclables:**
A miniature boat race, a race down the river down at Riverbend Park during RiverFest! Race starts at 12 pm! RiverFest runs from 10 am – 2 pm.
- September 4 Disposal of Your Unwanted Pesticides Safely:** The Clean Sweep Project is free of charge up to 250 pounds per participant. Over 250 pounds there will be a \$2.00 per pound charge.
https://www.oisc.purdue.edu/pesticide/clean_sweep.html
- September 20 SWCD Board Meeting:**
5:30 PM, SWCD Office, 59358 County Road 7, Elkhart, IN
- October 2 Disposal of Your Unwanted Pesticides Safely:** The Clean Sweep Project is free of charge up to 250 pounds per participant. Over 250 pounds there will be a \$2.00 per pound charge.
https://www.oisc.purdue.edu/pesticide/clean_sweep.html
- October 18 SWCD Board Meeting:**
5:30 PM, SWCD Office, 59358 County Road 7, Elkhart, IN
- November 6 Disposal of Your Unwanted Pesticides Safely:** The Clean Sweep Project is free of charge up to 250 pounds per participant. Over 250 pounds there will be a \$2.00 per pound charge.
https://www.oisc.purdue.edu/pesticide/clean_sweep.html
- November 15 SWCD Board Meeting:**
5:30 PM, SWCD Office, 59358 County Road 7, Elkhart, IN
- December 4 Disposal of Your Unwanted Pesticides Safely:** The Clean Sweep Project is free of charge up to 250 pounds per participant. Over 250 pounds there will be a \$2.00 per pound charge.
https://www.oisc.purdue.edu/pesticide/clean_sweep.html

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