



Grass Roots for Conservation



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Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Unmask Conservation

Over the last couple months, you have seen and read about how the SWCD is moving forward. We are very excited with the programs and the somewhat new approach we hope to add to conservation. One of the toughest aspects to any program and business is how do we get the word out. Well much like we use Grass Roots to help let you know what is happening. We also now have many new ways, Facebook, Instagram, texts, webpages, but the most important and the one most forgot about is word of mouth. It is easy to get information out and about with all our modern technology but there is just something to be said about a hand shake, fist bump, high five, or even a chest bump and a couple kind words. The word of mouth is one of the most important ways for us to help communicate about conservation. Now we are living in a time of protection and masks to help from spreading COVID-19, now I am not saying in any way to remove your masks and shake hands. What I am saying is we still need to communicate with a sense of personal compassion. Expressing our personal experiences and own trial and errors goes a long way. Our conservation practices are still the same as they were in the early part of the 1900's but our approaches have changed greatly. That would not have happened if we did not learn from each other. It took people talking and communicating with others on what worked, what didn't work. We learn a lot about things when they fail more so than if everything goes right. Makes us stronger more resilient and sometimes puts us in a better mood, I know it might be a stretch but sometimes.

The SWCD is working at getting as much information and education about conservation practices out into the community as we can. I am going to exhaust all measures of technology to get the word out, both new and old. What I am going to bank on the most and its one of the easiest and best forms of getting the word out is "YOU". You are the most important way of getting the word out and it is important to share the good, bad and ugly with neighbor, friends, and strangers, you can even share it with us. So however you feel best to help spread the word about conservation that is happening in your backyard, school, constructions site, agricultural fields, or wherever, you tell the story. You are living it, breathing it, and hopefully sharing it. Be safe out there wear a mask, wash your hands, sanitize frequently, but most importantly share your story. We want to help you unmask conservation.

Make it yours,



Welcome Kris

I am originally from Muncie, IN, and spent 12 years growing up in sunny Bradenton, FL. I returned to attend Ball State for my undergraduate degree in the NREM department, majoring in environmental management, with a concentration in soil and water quality. I graduated with my B.S. in 2015. Currently, I am finishing my M.S. degree through Ball State in soil science. My research involves studying the effects of cover crops and gated tile drainage on subsurface macro-nutrient movement. Outside of college, I have worked in my family's excavation business implementing various agricultural NRCS design plans. In 2017, I joined NRCS as a Soil Conservationist in the Kosciusko County field office and it is where I have been ever since. I currently reside in Dunkirk, IN, with my wife, Amanda and my daughter, Karmen. We live on our small family farm with 4 dogs and a barn full of chickens. I look forward to working with you and carrying on Amanda Kautz's great conservation efforts in Elkhart County!

Summer Interns Return to SWCD

Hey, we're back for the summer. I am **Brandi Henderson** one of the returning summer interns here at the SWCD. I will be going into my senior year of college at Purdue where I am studying Agriculture Education in hopes to become an Ag teacher. Things have been a bit crazy for most, but especially for college students as we had to return home way too soon. I am grateful to have to opportunity to return working for the SWCD this summer and continue to further my education about Agriculture, the components, as well as what all it provides to us. As most internships require interns to do a research project, I am looking forward to watching mine grow. Literally watch mine grow, I have four of the same tomato plants that are growing in different growing medias. The four different medias include: Miracle Grow, Worms, Worm Castings, and a control plant with regular top soil. I have been recording the data numerous times throughout the week and will continue to do so. I am observing the growth in height and width, will be taking soil samples, and providing the same amount of water to each plant throughout the rest of this summer. I am excited to watch my plants grow and see the end result of which soil media has the best effect on growing vegetables. I am thrilled to be back with y'all and can't wait to gain more knowledge about Agriculture!



Hey I am back for the summer! I am **Tanner DeMien** one of the returning summer interns from last year. I grew up in this area where I lived most of my childhood in Napanee and currently live in Osceola. I graduated from Penn High School in 2018. I will be a junior at Lindsey Wilson College where I wrestle and major in Sustainability. This year at school was very different for me as we switched to online school after spring break. This year at the SWCD we have been challenged to do a research project. I chose to do the Hoosier River Watch water quality tests for an agriculture area to see if the water quality changes from upstream to downstream. This involves taking tests and catching macroinvertebrates to help determine the quality of the water in those specific areas. I can't wait for the results to come out and see what the water quality of our local waterways.

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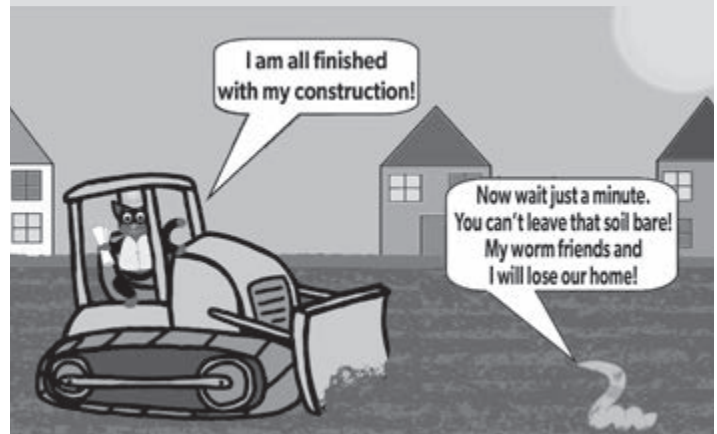
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Conversations WITH Conservation Cat



The bare naked truth is that soil is meant to be covered once it has been disturbed. When maintaining a construction site, it is important to get the ground seeded as soon as possible. When plants are removed from the surface of a site, the soil is exposed to the elements such as wind and water. When soil is not covered it is susceptible to erosion. Erosion is the movement of soil across the land. Although erosion can be a naturally occurring phenomenon, it is important that we do not increase the rate at which things erode. Sediment that has been washed away during a rain storm can have negative effects on water quality which is important to maintain life. Too much sediment in a stream can eliminate habitat through silting, reduce the amount of sunlight in the water column, and suffocate organisms by clogging their gills. When soil has plant coverage it increases infiltration which lowers the amount of sheet flow across the land which in turn reduces the amount of erosion. It is always best to keep it covered!

~ **Conservation Cat** ~

UPCOMING FSA DEADLINES

July 15th Acreage Reporting Deadline

August 1st Last day to file County Committee nominations

August 28th Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) Signup Deadline

September 1st Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) buy-up coverage premiums due

The **Coronavirus Food Assistance Program**, or CFAP, provides vital financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-percent-or-greater price decline or who had losses due to market supply chain disruptions due to COVID-19 and face additional significant market costs. To learn more or to see if you qualify, give the office a call or visit farmers.gov/cfap.

USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only. 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.

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 to the July edition of Blogging BMP's. We have reached the halfway point of the year and normally I would take some time to look back at where things have been, but this year I think I will just look forward. I am looking forward to the many new projects that have been submitted to the SWCD representing massive expansion and growth in the manufacturing industry that drives our local economy. I see farmers adding larger, more modern facilities to an already thriving agricultural sector of the county. Not to mention the housing market that, in spite of recent events, is still fairly strong in our area. It would be foolish for me to act like I don't see the obvious challenges that lie ahead for many people and businesses, but looking through the lens of the manufacturing and agricultural industries, things are trending in the right direction.

As many of these projects cycle from the planning stages, to the actual construction, followed by opening up the new facilities, the SWCD's role is crucial in ensuring the land that is disturbed either stays in its place or only moves where it is supposed to. As the project comes to completion, every business owner is ready to do two things, start doing business in their new facility and close out any permits that are outstanding. In our case, that would be filing a Notice of Termination or in stormwater lingo, N.O.T. Unfortunately, this is one of the more confusing steps of the process if you are not familiar with it.

Before we talk paperwork, I have a few milestones that need to be reached before you should start the N.O.T. process.

- First, are all water outlets protected with stones/riprap to minimize erosion where stormwater is releasing into either a retention or a positive outlet?
- Second, are all areas of the project stabilized?
- Third, has the vegetation on the site achieved 70% coverage?

Those three items are not the only thing that we look at when closing out a site, but are the most common thing that will prevent us from approving the closure of the site.

Once you feel like you meet the criteria, head over to our website and click the link that we have provided to get the necessary paperwork for filing an N.O.T. Once you complete the forms you can mail them to our office and we will do a final inspection on your site to ensure that you have met all of the guidelines set forth by the state of Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). If you would like assistance in getting the N.O.T. process started, feel free to contact me at tclark@elkhartcounty.com.

<https://www.elkcoswcd.org/developers/documents/>

If you would like to contact me with any other questions, comments, or ideas for future topics please send an email to tclark@elkhartcounty.com. Until next month, stay well and keep soil in its place!

Q: Does planting cover crops help reduce the pressure of mares tail in my field? If so, what covers are best for weed suppression?



Send your questions to Walden the Worm

A: Walden here,

Yes! I will begin by sharing some information from my underground library.

“The ecosystem is the highest level of biological integration; it is a self-sustaining system driven by energy from the sun...Plants have also evolved chemicals that limit or enhance the success of other plants in their vicinity and such allopathic relationships are of great importance in determining the make-up of plant communities.” 1

As I burrow this farmer's fields I am keenly aware some plants thrive next to other plants, their growth is enhanced. Some plants limit growth of other nearby plants; it is important to mention that weeds are plants too.

When alfalfa and grass are grown together their forage yield is enhanced. Oats and alfalfa seeded together helps to control problematic weed growth. Oats will grow rapidly in early spring and hold the weeds back partly due to less sunlight reaching the soil. The alfalfa can then start growing, the oats can then be cut back and the alfalfa is now able to out compete weeds. Are there zero weeds? No, but it is a big help. Soybeans seeded into chick weed or dandelion have poor germination and growth is limited. Is this due to an allopathic effect?

You stated your problem was mares tail. A uniform dense stand of cereal rye will help in controlling mares tail. Seed 60 pounds per acre (you could use more or add other species if you have experience planting into heavy cover). As a result of the cover crop the soil is covered reducing sunlight during the off season which in turn lowers the amount of weeds that can grow. It is difficult for the small seed of mares tail to compete with cereal rye. Some agronomists believe that the rye plant and resulting residue is allopathic to small seeds.

I want to stress that soil needs cover in the form of crop residue and/or living plants if soil biology is to be maintained. Mr. Farmer if your field is bare and naked over winter and spring mother nature will always attempt to cover your field with plants you call weeds.

Until next month,

– *Walden*

1Biology of plants 3rd edition Raven, Events and Curtis printed 1981 page 594

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 20 SWCD Board Meeting:

5:30 PM, New SWCD Office,
59358 County Road 7, Elkhart

August 13 LaGrange County Pasture Walk:

Corneal Troyer,
7530 S 075 W, Wolcottville, IN
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm • *Topic: Rotational grazing*

August 17 SWCD Board Meeting:

5:30 PM, New SWCD Office,
59358 County Road 7, Elkhart

September 7 Labor Day Holiday: The SWCD Office will be closed for the Labor Day Holiday

September 10 LaGrange County Pasture Walk:

Jay Lehman,
0055 S. 1000 W. Middlebury, IN
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm • *Topic: TBD*

September 19 SWCD Board Meeting:

5:30 PM, New SWCD Office,
59358 County Road 7, Elkhart

October 8 LaGrange County Pasture Walk:

Wayne Helmuth
9165 W 200 S, Wolcottville, IN
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm • *Topic: Rotational Grazing*

October 19 SWCD Board Meeting:

5:30 PM, New SWCD Office,
59358 County Road 7, Elkhart

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