



# Grass Roots for Conservation



Vol. 46

No. 3

March 2021

www.elkcoswcd.org

## Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District

59358 County Road 7, Elkhart, IN 46517 ~ Phone: (574) 523-2030 – [jhess@elkhartcounty.com](mailto:jhess@elkhartcounty.com)

### ***SWCD Annual Meeting Summary***

The 79th annual meeting of the Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was held virtually this year on March 5, 2021. Alex Wait, SWCD Supervisor and Election Committee Chair, conducted the supervisor election. Tom Kercher of Goshen, was re-elected and Darrell Shover of Syracuse was reappointed to serve a three-year term on the SWCD board. Those who made an outstanding contribution to conservation in Elkhart County in 2020 were recognized and are listed below. Thank you to everyone who attended and was able to take part of the accomplishments of our great stewards.

Awards were presented to: Craig, Jessica and Michelle Blough, Woodsbrook Farms Inc., Conservation Farmer of the Year; Mike Yoder, Friend of the SWCD; Krista Daniels, Educator of the Year; Tony Harmon, Urban Conservationist of the Year; and Stoney-M Farms, River Friendly Farmer of the Year.



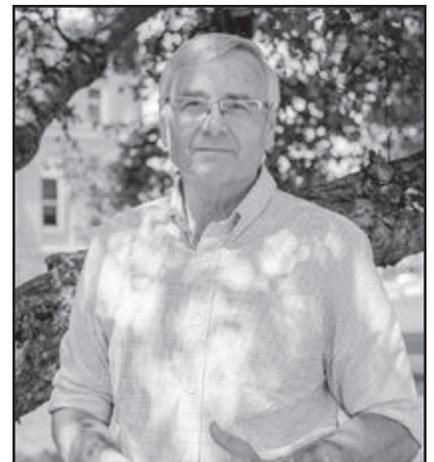
Ernest Miller - Stoney-M Farms  
River Friendly Farmer of the Year.



Craig, Jessica and Michelle Blough  
Woodsbrook Farms Inc.  
Conservation Farmer of the Year



Krista Daniels  
Educator of the Year



Mike Yoder  
Friend of the SWCD



# Rain Garden & Rain Barrel Workshop

Learn how and why to implement Rain Gardens  
and Rain Barrels at one of our workshops.  
Please choose one of the dates below to attend.

*\*Please note that each workshop is the same\**

**TUESDAY MARCH 9 @ 5:30 PM**  
(virtual)

**MONDAY MARCH 22 @ 5:30 PM**  
(virtual)

**WEDNESDAY APRIL 21 @ 5:30 PM**  
(virtual)

**WEDNESDAY MAY 5 @ 5:30 PM**  
(Bonneyville Schoolhouse)

**THURSDAY MAY 13 @ 5:30 PM**  
(Oxbow Park)

**TO REGISTER CONTACT ELKHART COUNTY SWCD**  
59358 County Road 7  
Elkhart, IN 46517  
574-523-2030  
[latkins@elkhartcounty.com](mailto:latkins@elkhartcounty.com)

# 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 where the focus is typically on different ways to help prevent erosion in construction, agriculture, and in your own front yard. This month I am going to take a break from the "norm" and spend a few minutes recognizing the individual that received the SWCD's 2020 Urban Conservationist of the Year award. If you are reading this article, you may have seen the brief paragraph in our annual report that gave a small overview of the recipient, Tony Harman from J.A. Wagner construction. Some bits and pieces of that are still in here, but after getting to know Tony a little better, I felt like it did not tell the whole story.

### **Urban Conservationist of the Year: Tony Harman, J.A. Wagner Construction**



Tony graduated from Purdue University's School of Technology in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in Building Construction Management and a minor in Organizational Leadership and Supervision. He spent a few years learning trades in the field before stepping into a project superintendent role for J.A. Wagner in 2012. He has worked his way up to project manager by learning all aspects of the business and taking a personal interest in each client. He tries to communicate with the owner from the onset of a project to ensure they understand all of the requirements, procedures, and timelines of the permitting process. He believes this makes them have a level of comfort with himself and the company, knowing that they are well versed in what is necessary and take 100% of the responsibility to make sure everything is handled. This helps build a trust in Tony and J.A. Wagner from the beginning. From there it is all about following through on promises and trying to stay on time and under budget.

Outside of work, Tony loves to spend time with his wife and three kids. He enjoys volunteering at their church, diving into home improvement projects, dabbling in wood working and working with his hands. He very much enjoys spending quality time with family and friends around their pool. When he has time, Tony likes to go back to a hobby he picked up with his college roommates, brewing his own beer. He enjoys fishing and water sports on a local lake when he can squeeze it in, making his commitment to preventing erosion on the job site a little more personal. Tony is 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).

In the last year, Tony has overseen several projects including an 11 acre parking lot for Utilimaster, an addition to Vista Manufacturing, and an addition to the Alliance Sheets building. He continues to work each day with the motivation of his wife and three kids, followed by the daily grind of work and being successful with the projects he is in charge of. When he takes on a project at work or at home, he is driven to get it completed with the best quality and attention to detail as possible even if results in a little more project cost or duration. He generally likes construction and like taking on small project around the house where he can get his hands dirty and make something his own.

It is quite obvious that Tony checks all of the boxes when it comes to what many feel is the most important and defining quality of a professional and that is education and experience. But as I have figured out in my life journey, being a professional is so much more than that. Tony exemplifies what it means to be a well-rounded human being that understands the importance of relationships and the willingness to ask questions, whether they be simple or difficult. He said something to me that really resonated and I feel like many others can attest to this. When I asked Tony about his hobbies, he explained that many of them have been constricted or left behind because of his growing family and his commitment to being a father and a husband. I can appreciate that as I have a family and have made my own personal sacrifices to be there for them.

I look forward to working with Tony in the future and find myself eager to forge more relationships with other contractors and conservationists throughout Elkhart County because I know there are many more stories just like Tony's. So again, to Tony, congratulations from the SWCD for receiving the Urban Conservationist of the Year Award.

**Q. Given the heavy winter and spring rains Indiana receives, what are the long-term effects of fall tillage?**



## Send your questions to Walden the Worm

*The "Dear Abby" of conservation farming!*

**A.** Few things upset me more than heavy fall tillage. My burrow (home) is destroyed, my winter food supplies are mixed with dirt and buried. I can handle spring tillage better, but yearly fall tillage and I will become history. As a night crawler I require soil cover, food on the soil surface, and undisturbed soil. In this setting I do my best work by helping your soil have good structure, drain well, be drought tolerant and productive. Mr. Farmer are you concerned about fertile soil washing off your fields? I urge you to collect run off from your bare field, is the water cloudier than a nearby covered field? Also, check the water for crop nutrients. Is the snow dirty at field edge? How much fertile top dirt blew into Ohio and Michigan? Did you lose crop nutrients? Yes!

I also urge you to check the temperature of your bare field. Corn roots can handle more heat than my thin skin, but prior to crop canopy a bare field can get hot. Corn roots like soil temps below 90 degrees. Mr. Farmer take off your shoes and socks, and stroll through your bare field on a hot sunny day. Do your feet burn?

Now from my underground library. From our soils and their management Donahue, Follett and Tulloch, page 286 shows two barrels of the same soil, fertilizer, seed and planting date. A hand full of worms were put into barrel on the right. Result; much improved growth. A Wisconsin study conducted by Sjoerd Diviker Soil Specialist at Penn State found average rooting depth of no-till corn was 49 inches. Root depth of tilled corn was 26 inches. A no-tilled field had 2.3 night crawler mounds per sq. ft. while a tilled field had no mounds or deep burrows from night crawlers.

Let's go back in time to 1924. The soil and its management by M. F. Miller. In 1924 soils were managed for fertility rather than fertilized with many chemicals. Page 129 and 130 state; "Soil organic matter contains large amounts of plant food which is quickly made available to crops when the land is tilled." Do you see a problem with the release of crop nutrients long before crop need or seeding! Again nutrients lost.

Are you good with your wife putting your breakfast of eggs, bacon and toast on the table the night before? Less work for her in the morning.

— Walden

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**March 22 Rain Garden & Rain Barrel Workshop:** Learn how and why to implement Rain Gardens and Rain Barrels at one of our workshops. 5:30 PM, virtually. *Please note that each workshop is the same* To register contact Elkhart County SWCD (574) 523-2030 59358 County Road 7, Elkhart, IN 46517 - latkins@elkhartcounty.com

**April 19 SWCD Board Meeting:** 5:30 PM, SWCD Office 59358 County Road 7, Elkhart

**April 21 Rain Garden & Rain Barrel Workshop:** Learn how and why to implement Rain Gardens and Rain Barrels at one of our workshops. 5:30 PM, virtually. *Please note that each workshop is the same* To register contact Elkhart County SWCD (574) 523-2030 59358 County Road 7, Elkhart, IN 46517 - latkins@elkhartcounty.com

**May 5 Rain Garden & Rain Barrel Workshop:** Learn how and why to implement Rain Gardens and Rain Barrels at one of our workshops. 5:30 PM, **Bonneyville Schoolhouse.** *Please note that each workshop is the same* To register contact Elkhart County SWCD (574) 523-2030 59358 County Road 7, Elkhart, IN 46517 - latkins@elkhartcounty.com

**May 13 Rain Garden & Rain Barrel Workshop:** Learn how and why to implement Rain Gardens and Rain Barrels at one of our workshops. 5:30 PM, **Oxbow Park.** *Please note that each workshop is the same* To register contact Elkhart County SWCD (574) 523-2030 59358 County Road 7, Elkhart, IN 46517 - latkins@elkhartcounty.com

**May 17 SWCD Board Meeting:** 5:30 PM, SWCD Office 59358 County Road 7, Elkhart

### SWCD - NRCS CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORY

59358 County Road 7, Elkhart, IN 46517

Ph. (574) 523-2030

[www.elkcoswcd.org](http://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:

Wes Krug, 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.