the Conservation Gram

Published on a quarterly basis by the Gibson County SWCD

The mission of the Gibson County SWCD is: "To enable citizens to make wise land use decisions through conservation education and technical assistance."

Spring Issue, March 2012
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Scenes from the 69th IASWCD Annual Conference and the 65th Gibson County SWCD Annual Meeting

Pictured left -Dave Gress of rural Princeton was elected to serve a three-year term as a Gibson County SWCD supervisor at the 65th Gibson County SWCD Annual Meeting held on Tuesday, January 24. WELCOME, DAVE!

Dave White, NRCS Chief, gave a motivating speech at the 69th IASWCD Annual Conference held in Indianapolis on January 9-11. Attending from the Gibson County office were: Debbie Wolfe and Dave Greubel, supervisors, Travis Gogel, NRCS District Conservationist, and SWCD employees Ethel Osborn and Ann Ice.

Pictured left—Gary Seibert, ISDA Resource Specialist, assisted the district in displaying the Showcase Award at the IASWCD Annual Conference. *Pictured right*— first row, Travis Gogel and SWCD Supervisor Dave Greubel and back row—SWCD Supervisor Debbie Wolfe, former SWCD Office Manager Ethel Osborn, NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty and SWCD Education Coordinator Ann Ice accepting the 2011 IASWCD District Showcase Award.

There was an excellent turnout for the annual meeting and many thanks go to all who helped to make it a success.

Fourteen former and current SWCD supervisors were at the recent annual meeting and took time for a photo with me, my final annual meeting. I would like to say that I have enjoyed working with and meeting many wonderful people over almost thirty-four years. When I started on April 3, 1978, I never dreamed that I would have stayed this long. I have seen many changes and worked with over ninety people from the various partnership agencies. I am looking forward to retirement and hope it will be both relaxing and rewarding. Thanks to everyone that sent cards, gifts, those that took the time to come to my reception and everyone who played a part in making this a great affair for me. I feel truly blessed .

Ethel

"All Gibson County SWCD programs and services are offered on a nondiscrimination basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, marital status, or handicap."

USDA

NEWS FROM THE GIBSON COUNTY FARM SERVICE AGENCY

DCP/ACRE SIGNUP UNDERWAY

The Gibson County Farm Service Agency reminds producers that signup for the 2012 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) or Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) Program began January 23 and ends June 1, 2012. It is critical for producers to begin the enrollment process as soon as possible. The 2012 signup period is a shorter timeframe than in previous years.

Producers who choose to participate in either the revenue-based ACRE safety net or the price-based DCP safety net must enroll their farms each year. All owners and operators who will share in the DCP or ACRE payments on the farm must sign the DCP/ACRE contract (CCC-509) by June 1, 2012. All producers with an interest in base acres must be identified on the DCP/ACRE contract and receive a proportionate share of the DCP/ACRE direct payment for the farm. Producers with an interest in ACRE commodities must be enrolled on the ACRE contract in order to be eligible for potential ACRE revenue payments. For 2012, the farm bill authorizes an increase in the payment acres from 83.3% to 85% of the base acres. Advance direct payments are not authorized for 2012.

For more information about the DCP or ACRE Programs or to make an appointment, please contact the Gibson County FSA office at (812) 385-5033, ext. 2 or visit http://www.fsa.usda.gov.

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What about an odd corner or just a hard to reach field that you just hate to farm in the river bottoms?

Maybe you have a ditch that you're interested in installing a filter strip and providing warm season grass for wildlife habitat.

Then CREP just might be right for you. The CREP program provides additional incentives to the CRP program provided by Farm Service Agency.

For river or creek bottom land there is opportunity for the bottom land tree planting. CREP will give the landowner an additional $450/acre payment and an additional 40% incentive of the CRP annual rental payment. For the filter strip, Warm Season Grass plantings are given a $100/acre payment plus the 40% rate.

CREP is administered by the Farm Service Agency and the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation, in cooperation with the Local County SWCD, USDA NRCS. For more information, please call the Gibson County Farm Service Agency or ISDA at 812-385-5033, extension 2.

USDA INVITES MINORITY PRODUCERS TO JOIN USDA MINORITY FARM REGISTER

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) invites minority farmers and ranchers in Gibson County and across the nation to voluntarily join the USDA Minority Farm Register to receive information and opportunities from USDA agencies.

"The new Minority Farm Register is an outreach tool to reach underserved farmers and ranchers who are not currently enrolled in USDA loan, farm or conservation programs," said Janet Ault, Gibson FSA county executive director. "The Register is a shared outreach list that will help USDA, community-based organizations and minority-serving educational institutions to communicate with minority farmers and ranchers."

By joining the Register, minority producers may receive outreach materials, newsletters, and program announcements from USDA agencies. They may also receive information and assistance from other USDA-approved outreach partners, such as community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and minority-serving educational institutions. USDA will carefully control access to and use of the Register.

Individuals wishing to join the Register must sign and date a form that provides their name and address. Providing phone numbers, e-mail address, race, ethnicity, gender and farm or ranch location will be voluntary, although the additional information increases the producer's opportunities for receiving timely assistance.

The Register pamphlet with the registration form is available at the Gibson FSA-USDA Service Center or from approved USDA outreach partners. Completed forms may be mailed to: USDA Minority Farm Register, USDA Stop Code 0503, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250. FSA and USDA's Office of Advocacy and Outreach are jointly administering the Register. Registration forms are available in Spanish (AD-2035SP) and English (AD-2035) on the FSA web site (www.fsa.usda.gov) under "Forms".

An individual may remove his or her name from the Register by writing to the Minority Farm Register, USDA Stop Code 0503, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250.

For more information, please contact the Farm Service Agency, STOP 0503, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0503 (Call 1-866-538-2610; Fax: 1-866-302-1760; E-mail: MSDA@USDA.gov).

New CWI Technician

Jamen Frederick, Petersburg, has been selected as the Clean Water Indiana (CWI) Technician for the Pike and Gibson County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Jamen is a recent graduate of Vincennes University where he majored in AgriBusiness and is continuing his education to receive his bachelor's degree by taking soils and environmental classes.

He was raised around a successful farming operation where he played a key role in conservation efforts on his family farm, and has helped a local excavating company install conservation practices for county farmers. He hopes to continue his farming success and manage the business with his younger brother Alec.

When Jamen is not busy farming or tackling soil and nutrient reduction, he enjoys hunting and fishing.

He is the son of Mike and Patty Frederick of Petersburg and Kristine Miles of Winslow.

His position was made possible by a 2012 CWI grant to hire a part time technician for three years. He will be assisting both Gibson And Pike County SWCDs during that time.

Dates and Deadline Dates to Remember:

March 13—Southwest Regional Envirothon—Camp Illiana, Washington, Indiana
March 15—last day to purchase NAP Insurance for spring seeded crops
March 22—Update on Cover Crops—Watch for more info in newspaper or website
March 31—Request loans for Small Grains (wheat)
April 11—Fourth Grade Farm Fair, Gibson County Fairgrounds, Princeton, Indiana
April 29-May 6—Soil & Water Stewardship Week
May 31 - Certify small grains (wheat, etc)
May 31—Report wheat (small grains) production for ACRE/NAP
May 31—Request Loans for '11 crops
June 1—DCP/ACRE Sign Up Deadline
June 1—2010 SURE Sign Up Deadline
July 15—Certify all other crops (corn, soybeans, CRP, watermelons, etc.)
July 15—Report ACRE/NAP production on all other '11 crops

USDA Announces CRP General Sign-up

The Farm Service Agency announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will conduct a four-week Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general signup. This CRP signup will begin on March 12, 2012 and end on April 6, 2012. CRP has a 25-year legacy of successfully protecting the nation's natural resources, while providing significant economic and environmental benefits to rural communities across the United States.

Currently in Indiana, 279,937 acres are enrolled in CRP; and contracts on an estimated 36,344 acres will expire on September 30, 2012.

CRP is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help them use environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion and develop wildlife habitat. In return, USDA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years. Producers with expiring contracts and producers with environmentally sensitive land are encouraged to evaluate their options under CRP. Producers also are encouraged to look into CRP's other enrollment opportunities offered on a continuous, non-competitive, signup basis.

Offers for CRP contracts are ranked according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). FSA collects data for each of the EBI factors based on the relative environmental benefits for the land offered. Each eligible offer is ranked in comparison to all other offers and selections made from that ranking. FSA uses the following EBI factors to assess the environmental benefits for the land offered:

- Wildlife habitat benefits resulting from covers on contract acreage;
- Water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff and leaching;
- On-farm benefits from reduced erosion;
- Benefits that will likely endure beyond the contract period;
- Air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion; and
- Cost.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, visit a local FSA service center or go online at www.fsa.usda.gov.

The Gibson County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) would like to thank the following landusers, businesses, banks, etc. for their continuing support and financial contribution towards our annual meting costs, education programs, newsletter ads, door prizes, etc. throughout this past year. If we have omitted your name or business, let us know.

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Education Update

By Ann Ice, SWCD Education Coordinator

The Gibson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) would like to encourage High School teams of five students to participate in the Southwest Regional Envirothon. It will be held Tuesday, March 13 at Camp Illianna, Washington, Indiana. The Envirothon is an environmental learning competition that focuses on five natural resources; forestry, aquatics, wildlife, soils and a current event. The SWCD will assist participants with registration fees. For additional information visit the Envirothon website at: http://www.iaswcd.org/district_tools/envirothon.html

The Fourth Grade Farm Fair will be held on Wednesday, April 11 at the Gibson County Fairgrounds, Princeton. All fourth grade students in Gibson County are invited to attend. There are presentations that are farm related and non-farm related. There are also presentations with animals and without animals. It is a fun day for students to enrich their knowledge of topics outside the classroom setting.

For additional information on SWCD education events contact Ann Ice at 385-5033, extension 110 or ann.ice@in.nacdnet.net

The Gibson County Soil and Water Conservation District is offering rain and compost barrels for sale. The public will have the opportunity to purchase the barrels for a discounted rate with the SWCD paying for the balance through a Clean Water Indiana Grant. A Rain Barrel complete kit will be $42 and the single compost Barrel will be $63, plus state sales tax. Additional information and an order form can be found at www.gibsonswcd.org. or call the office at 385-5033, extension 3.

On Farm Network Unites Farmers in Field-Based Research

By Hans Schmitz, Purdue Extension Educator

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) identified the Lower Wabash as a watershed of interest in early 2011 for the On Farm Network program, now a 2-year-old program that was initially piloted in the Jasper County area in 2010. In response, the Gibson County Soil and Water Conservation District, local ISDA Resource Specialists, Gibson and Vanderburgh County Natural Resource Conservation Service conservationists, and Purdue Extension Educators for Gibson, Warrick, and Posey counties collaborated to sign up 27 fields from 15 farmers in Gibson, Posey, Vanderburgh, and Warrick counties as participating fields in the program.

During the growing season, these 15 farmers graciously shared their nitrogen management techniques for each of the fields in the study and allowed the partnering organizations access to their fields for scouting and training exercises. Each field was aerially photographed in late August. These photographs were matched with known soil data from the NRCS to identify field areas of interest for corn stalk nitrate sampling. After black layer in the field, ten stalks were then cut from four locations in each field and sent to a certified laboratory for analysis. All data gathered were shipped to Iowa for analysis by Dr. Tracy Blackmer. In early February, participating farmers then gathered in Darmstadt as Dr. Blackmer interpreted the results of the aggregated data. The stalk nitrate data allowed Dr. Blackmer to compare initial nitrogen rates applied before and during the growing season with plant nitrogen acquired at the end of the growing season. Certain fields showed very varied stalk nitrate amounts, suggesting a need for altered management practices to increase uniformity in nitrogen allocation across a field. Other fields were uniformly low in stalk nitrate, while yet others were uniformly high. The goal of this research is to ascertain common nitrogen management practices in this area and develop field-based recommendations for nitrogen use based on data collected. The On Farm Network in its current form will continue in this area for two more years, while plans exist to expand the network to other watersheds around the state.

Soil Health Workshop

A Soil Health Workshop was recently held for all producers in the area. Travis Gogel, District Conservationist at the Gibson County Office, and Bill Norfleet, District Conservationist for Posey County, demonstrated the slake test and rainfall simulator on a no-till soil versus a conventional till soil. Soil health is managed to its maximum potential through a system of conservation practices, including never-till, cover crops, advanced nutrient and pest management, buffers and drainage systems where appropriate. This approach results in healthy soil that reduces erosion, requires less nutrient inputs, manages the effects of flood and drought while reducing nutrients and sediment loading to streams and rivers. Sponsors for the event were JL Equipment, Springfield Plastics, Inc. of Auburn, IL, Baker Seed Company LLC of West Salem, IL and Ed-Air of Vincennes.

Pictured—A perfect example of why farmers are having trouble with their drainage ditches. The left side of the ditch the farmer is farming way too close to the ditch and spraying the vegetation on the ditch bank. Erosion and mass wasting on side slopes is occurring. The right side of the photo shows how the farmer is not encroaching or spraying near the ditch itself. This picture demonstrates that many ditch problems are a direct result of their own actions and shows simple ways to stop soil and nutrient loss.

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The Gibson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has a 7-foot Tye No-Till Drill as a service to local land users.

The drill is designed to plant warm and cool season grasses, legumes and soybeans. It is great for work on small acreages and transports easily behind a 1/2 ton pickup. The cost is $8 per acre with a $50 minimum.

Call the SWCD Office at 812-385-5033, Ext. 3 to reserve it.

Gibson County SWCD and USDA - FSA

229 S. Second Avenue, Princeton, IN 47670
812-385-5033 or Fax: 812-385-2037

The Gibson County Board of Supervisors meet on the second Monday of each month at the USDA Farm Service Center.

Gibson County SWCD Supervisors & Staff

Supervisors:
- Debbie Wolfe
- Ron Hudson
- Matt Michel
- Dave Greubel
- Dave Gress

Associate Supervisors:
- Steve Doerner
- Ed Horrall
- Cleoramae G. Stunkel
- Daniel Lamey

Office Staff:
Travis Gogel, NRCS District Conservationist
SWCD Office Manager
Ann Ice, SWCD Education Coordinator
Jamen Frederick, CWI Technician
Leafy White, Earth Team Volunteer

Due to the nature of the work the SWCD and NRCS staff performs, at times, there will be no one in the office. Please call (385-5033, Ext. 3) before coming. If you wish to leave a message, go to Ext. 122

USDA - FSA County Committee & Staff

County Committee:
- Ed Horrall
- Joe Ziliak
- Kenny Page

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- Glenn Morris
- Shirley Strickland

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