



Hoosier



Headlines

A Bimonthly  
Indiana NRCS Newsletter

January/February 2006

Issue 1

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## Heart to Heart ... with Hardisty

\*\*Welcome to the first issue of *Hoosier Headlines*, our new NRCS Indiana newsletter. We trust this newsletter will provide you with valuable information on conservation happenings in Indiana.



Over the years NRCS published 276 issues of *Partnership Today* that heralded conservation news for the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP). With the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) and the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation newsletters established, a partnership newsletter is no longer needed. Instead, we can disseminate even more information to a broader audience with our individual newsletters. Please note the web links to our partners' newsletters so you will be in touch with all the activities of the ICP.

\*\*The Indiana Field Employees Council met with Xavier Montoya, acting state conservationist, for the first time on January 26. The objective of the Council is to provide two-way feedback between field staff and the state conservationist, and a place to propose new ideas and talk through critical issues. During this initial meeting, the group established how they will operate, when they will meet, terms of confidentiality, and how and when new members will come on board. The team also shared concerns and ideas with Xavier on field issues. I look forward to working closely with this group in the future.

\*\*I'm presently on detail at the National Employee Development Center in Fort Worth, Texas. Though I'm enjoying the Lone Star state, I eagerly anticipate returning home soon. Until then, keep up the good work of helping people help the land!

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## **Volunteers – Essential to Indiana Conservation**

The NRCS Earth Team volunteer organization had another great year during 2005. With almost 35,000 volunteers logging nearly a million hours, the Earth Team represents \$16.4 million (based on an hourly rate of \$17.55 established by Points of Light Foundation) worth of conservation-related service to NRCS and the Nation. These individuals and groups can be proud of their contribution to soil and water conservation on private lands.

The Indiana Earth Team recorded 766 volunteers in 2005 and reported 10,860 hours worked to support natural resources conservation. In Indiana, 47 percent of the NRCS offices have volunteers reporting hours for the program. If you have volunteers working in your office and haven't registered them yet, please support the Indiana Earth Team by recording your volunteers and reporting the hours they work.

For assistance, contact the Indiana Earth Team coordinator in your Area: Northeast Area, Bill Lambert; Northwest Area, Julie McLemore; Southeast Area, Pat Larr; and Southwest Area, Michelle Phillips. Or you may contact Nancy Manion, Indiana's Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator at [nancy.manion@in.nrcs.usda.gov](mailto:nancy.manion@in.nrcs.usda.gov).

### **Indiana Earth Team in Action**

#### Weed Whacker Now Afloat!

Rehabilitation of a 20 year old aquatic weed harvester was completed last fall. The Wabash Erie Canal Association bought this damaged commercial floating weed harvester from a lake association in Wisconsin. In six weeks a crafty crew of five volunteers successfully made repairs and the vessel was christened on October 26, 2005.

Critical to the restructuring of this mechanical wonder was the replacement of the ailing steel pontoons with a completely different shaped aluminum canister from a donated pontoon boat. Intriguing manipulation for the replacement in-

involved the blacksmithing and welding skills of Roy Patrick and other mechanical skills of Ron Dust, Ed Gruber and Bill Draper. Together these senior minds worked to create a marvelous aquatic weed harvester!



Photo by Dan McCain

#### Eagle Scout Project

Eagle Scout Ryan Heck, of Somerset, Indiana, supervised an enormous project at the Lost Sister Trail, Mississinewa Reservoir in Miami County. Heck's Boy Scout troupe assisted him by volunteering 217 hours to complete a foot bridge as part of the renovation of the trail initiated by the Miami County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The trail is used by fifth graders as part of the outdoor education field days conducted by the SWCD each year.

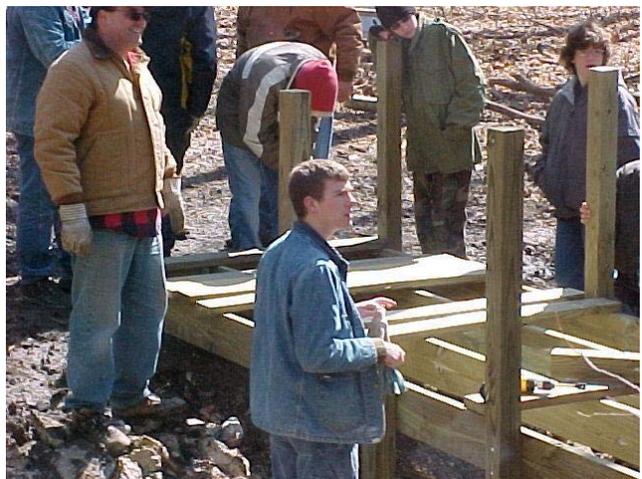


Photo by Jan Stout

**\*\*\* Employee Spotlight \*\*\***

Although he resides in Lebanon, Indiana, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations **Chris Tippie** spent much of 2005 at his 'home away from home'. Chris served as team leader of the NRCS Strategic Planning core team on detail to national headquarters from March to October 2005.

The 11 member core team, responsible for developing the agency's strategic plan, came from various field positions across the country. They played a key role in launching a comprehensive planning process that involved conducting assessments of internal strengths/weaknesses and external opportunities/barriers affecting the future of natural resources conservation.

Chris worked closely with Executive Sponsors to ensure the work was completed on schedule and the plan was bold, forward thinking, and focused on natural resource issues. The Executive Sponsors were Kathy Gugulis, Deputy Chief for Strategic Planning and Accountability, and Dick Coombe, Regional Assistant Chief-East. These sponsors and Chief Bruce Knight stressed the importance of this strategic plan being in tune with the benefits that our customers and partners expect from the agency regarding the nation's natural resources.

The team tapped into the expertise of a variety of people to successfully complete their task. They con-



tracted NACD to hold 11 listening sessions and two workshops for input, and they conducted an all employee survey. An 11 member Steering Team—made up of deputy chiefs, state conservationists, and deputy state conservationists—deliberated input from the core team and made final decisions on the plan's content. For external feedback during the process, a Sounding Board of representatives from six outside organizations provided an outlet for bouncing ideas and commenting on drafts.

The final version of the plan was outlined for the National Leadership Team at their January 2006 meeting. The completed plan, which will be available soon, outlines the Agency Mission and Vision, Over-arching Strategies, Mission Goals, Management Goals, Business Lines and Customer Segments.

Chris learned some valuable lessons while on detail—including how to maneuver the Metro train system and to only buy what you can carry in two hands while grocery shopping, because the only way to get it home was on foot! His weekend hours were filled with taking in the rich history and cultural opportunities that the nation's capital affords.

When asked about his detail Chris stated, "I would encourage any employee to take an opportunity for a detail assignment. They're not all in D.C. and certainly most are for shorter durations than mine. Any detail enables you to view your work and our agency from a different perspective."

**PERSONNEL UPDATES**

Recently, we bid farewell to nine NRCS Indiana employees who served the agency well for many years. We send them into their retirement years with our very best wishes for a prosperous future!

- 11-30-05 Charles Walker, district conservationist
- 12-31-05 Keith Gilmore, agricultural engineer
- 01-03-06 Sheldon Dynes, civil engineer
- 01-03-06 Robert Dunn, agricultural engineer
- 01-03-06 Thomas Wagner, civil engineering technician
- 01-03-06 Edward Stuff, Technical Services team leader
- 01-03-06 John Bush, district conservationist
- 01-03-06 Dave Drew, resource conservationist
- 01-03-06 George McElrath, resource soil scientist

## **Submit Your Master Farmer Nominations Now!**

Tom Beckman, editor of Indiana Prairie Farmer Magazine and Farm Progress Publications, is now seeking nominations for the 2006 Master Farmers. Nomination forms must be sent to Indiana Prairie Farmer, P.O. Box 247, Franklin, IN 46131 and be postmarked by April 15, 2006. Presentations will be made at the Indiana State Fair in August. Go to [www.iaswcd.org/PDFs/Updates/2-3-06MasterFarmerNomination.doc](http://www.iaswcd.org/PDFs/Updates/2-3-06MasterFarmerNomination.doc) for a nomination form.

## **CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON NEW ERA FOR INDIANA CONSERVATION**

The 2006 IASWCD Annual Conference, “An Exciting New Era for Indiana Conservation,” lived up to its name. Headliners like Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Conner, Lt. Governor Becky Skillman, and NACD President Bill Wilson offered their thoughts on the direction of conservation in Indiana and across the country. Several themes emerged during the conference, including the need for local and state funds to take advantage of federal funding opportunities, the new Indiana Conservation Partnership’s strategic plan as an example of cooperative conservation, and discussion and speculation about what is to come with the next Farm Bill.



Several conference events allowed NRCS to share information, thank partners, and celebrate our successes:

- NRCS was honored to have an intimate question and answer session with Secretary Conner. He took the time to meet with a group of district conservationists behind closed doors, discussing both policy and program specific issues. Secretary Conner was candid and approachable, and shared speculation that the next Farm Bill may streamline conservation programs.

- The Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP) was able to recognize SWCDs that assisted with workload in CSP and CREP areas, and through Cooperative Agreements. The Hoosier Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society was gracious enough to host this networking event, where ICP mugs were presented to these districts. The session was also a successful membership drive for the Hoosier Chapter. (Tammy Lawson and Jerod Chew, ISDA Division of Soil Conservation, were filling out membership applications by the end of the night!)



- The ICP Strategic Plan was rolled out at the legislative breakfast. Bob Eddleman, State Soil Conservation Board Chair, walked through the six strategies in the plan, and both Lt. Governor Skillman and Secretary Conner supported the plan and the partnership in their remarks. They also showed their support by joining ICP leaders for a press conference on the plan following the breakfast.



## February—Black History Month

Americans have recognized black history annually since 1926, first as "Negro History Week" and later as "Black History Month". What you might not know is that black history had barely begun to be studied—or even documented—when the tradition originated. Although blacks have been in America at least as far back as colonial times, it was not until the 20th century that they gained a respectable presence in the history books.

### **Blacks Absent from History Books**

We owe the celebration of Black History Month, and more importantly, the study of black history, to Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Born to parents who were former slaves, he spent his childhood working in the Kentucky coal mines and enrolled in high school at age twenty. He graduated within two years and later went on to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard. The scholar was disturbed to find in his studies that history books largely ignored the black American population—and when blacks did figure into the picture, it was generally in ways that reflected the inferior social position they were assigned at the time.

### **Established Journal of Negro History**

Woodson was always one to act on his ambitions, decided to take on the challenge of writing black Americans into the nation's history. He established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now called the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History) in 1915, and a year later founded the widely respected Journal of Negro History. In 1926, he launched Negro History Week as an initiative to bring national attention to the contributions of black people throughout American history. Woodson chose the second week of February for Negro History Week because it marks the birthdays of two men who greatly influenced the black American population, Frederick Douglas and Abraham Lincoln.

——— Adapted from an article written by Elissa Haney.

~ *In Memory* ~



### *Coretta Scott King*

April 27, 1927—January 30, 2006

Coretta Scott was born to Obadiah Scott and Bernice McMurry Scott on April 27, 1927 in Marion, Alabama. After graduating as valedictorian from Lincoln High School in May 1945, she went on to study at Antioch College and received an A.B. in Elementary Education and Music in 1951. Prepared by her family, education, and personal commitment for a life dedicated to social justice and peace, she played an important leadership role in the American Civil Rights Movement.

On June 18, 1953, she married Martin Luther King, Jr. During their marriage, she gave birth to two sons and two daughters.

Mrs. King actively supported her husband in his crusade for civil rights. After his assassination on April 4, 1968, Mrs. King stepped out into the forefront to continue her husband's legacy. She continued to stand up for social justice for the rest of her life.



## **LINKS FOR PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTERS**

Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, *Weekly Updates*:  
<http://www.iaswcd.org/WeeklyUpdates06.htm>

ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation, *Cultivating Connections*:  
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/news/index/html>

## Program Update—CSP

On January 31, Chief Bruce Knight announced the 60 CSP watersheds selected nationally for sign-up in 2006. In Indiana, the Wildcat Watershed made the list. Wildcat includes land in Grant, Tipton, Howard, Clinton, Carroll, Tippecanoe, and Madison counties. Randolph County of eastern Indiana has land in the Upper Great Miami Watershed, which was selected for CSP in Ohio.

The 2006 sign-up began on February 13 and is open for six weeks until March 31. According to program leaders, we are holding sign-up early in the year—before planting for most producers. When the 2006 CSP watersheds were announced nationally last fall, our program leaders wanted to announce them early so we could get our field staff ready, and our field staff could get farmers in the watersheds ready. That was before the 2006 budget was final, and it appeared more watersheds would be eligible. Chief Knight has committed that the remainder of the 2006 list of eligible watersheds will be first in line for future program sign-ups.



The 15 percent cap on CSP technical assistance continues to be a significant restraint on the program. That's why CSP is designed to be self-certifying. We rely heavily on the producer knowing the farm. Nobody knows it better.

NRCS' goal has always been to help land users put as much conservation on the ground as they can, and now CSP rewards those who have been good stewards of the land. It helps producers maintain and further their conservation commitment. Through rewards and incentives, CSP builds a foundation of natural resources conservation that will provide benefits to the public, like clean air, clean water, healthy soil, and places for wildlife for generations to come.

We are excited that CSP is still watershed oriented, and the goal is that eventually it will touch every watershed in the state. Our message to farmers who have not had a chance to sign up is: *Prepare now to make yourself eligible and to be ready when CSP comes to your watershed. Get your farm records in order so you can complete the application process easily.*

Information on what producers will need to apply is in the Self-Assessment Workbook which can be found on the NRCS web site at [www.in.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov).

## Technology Today

NRCS continues to be the national leader in developing and maintaining technical guidelines for applying conservation on America's private lands. To provide better services to clients and increase efficiencies, the agency has made dramatic strides in integrating technology into daily operations. Last October, Chief Bruce Knight and several members of his staff came to Indiana to demonstrate some of our new, innovative capabilities to Tom Bechman and another Farm Progress Company editor.

During the demonstration, called the NRCS Technology Showcase, NRCS staffers highlighted the connections we are making to deliver technology. Some of the products that were discussed included:

- Plants Database and VegSpec
- Soils Data and SNOwpack TELemetry
- Conservation Planning Toolkit
- Electronic Field Office Technical Guide
- TechReg
- Mobile Field Office and Field Office Tools



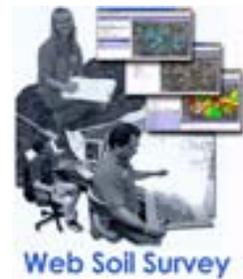
Several Indiana NRCS staffers took part in the technology demonstrations, including Curt Kneuen, district conservationist in Rushville, Indiana. Chief Knight and the rest of the headquarters staff were impressed and asked Curt to be part of their presentation team to demonstrate new technology and technical tools at the NACD Annual Meeting in Houston, Texas, held January 29 to February 2, 2006. The Technology Showcase was set up in the exhibit area for all attendees to see.

Curt's perspective as a district conservationist in the field office added credibility to the demonstration because he works directly with our primary customers. He interacted principally with SWCD board supervisors and NRCS staff as he explained how to use the Web Soil Survey, energy calculator, and nitrogen awareness tool. Curt found the crowd to be interested in all the tools, but especially in the Web Soil Survey.

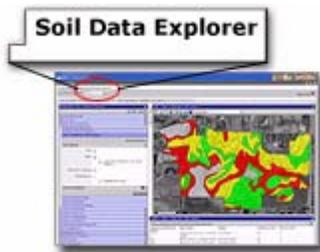
## Featured Website—Web Soil Survey

<http://soils.usda.gov/survey>

USDA's Web Soil Survey is a simple yet powerful way to view and analyze soil survey maps and reports. This tool can be used to assist with every aspect of public and private land use and development decisions.



The site is designed with three easy to use features—Define, View, and Explore. Users can define and view a geographic area of interest, which can be printed or saved for use in a geographic information system (GIS). The viewer also can explore the designated location for specific soils data and build a customized report that addresses the viewer's individual needs. This helps the viewer determine the suitability of soils in a specific area for a particular use.



Web Soil Survey will slowly phase out the printed and bound soil survey books available at local USDA Service Centers and public libraries. The site will be updated and maintained online as the single authoritative source of soil survey information.

## Mark Your Calendar

### February

- 02-25-06 This Land is Your Land: Options for Preservation, Carmel Legacy Fund Community Life and Learning Center, 515 E Main Street, Carmel. Cost of \$15 at door. Contact Central Indiana Land Trust at [info@cilti.org](mailto:info@cilti.org) or 317-631-5263. (8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.)
- 02-27-06 Healthy Drainage Workshop, Elwood Municipal Building focusing on helping landowners learn about the drainage system and steps to improve it. For info visit [www.madisonswcd.org](http://www.madisonswcd.org) or contact Laura Fribley at 765-644-4249, ext. 3. (6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.)

### March

- 03-01-06 This Land is Your Land: Keeping Your Land AND Making a Profit, Hendricks County Fairgrounds, Danville. Pre-register for \$10 per person, or \$15 at door. Contact Central Indiana Land Trust at [info@cilti.org](mailto:info@cilti.org) or 317-631-5263. (4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.)
- 03-02-06 Ripley County SWCD 13th Annual No-till Breakfast, Hopewell Baptist Church near Holton for \$3/person. PARP Certification Program following breakfast for \$10. RSVP to 812-689-6410, ext. 3 by **February 24**. (8:00 a.m.)

(more...)

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- 03-07-06 NE Area Meeting, Peabody Library, Columbia City
- 03-07-06 Hamilton County SWCD Annual Meeting/Workshop, 4-H Exhibition Center, Noblesville. ISDA Director Andy Miller will be Keynote Speaker. Register with Mark McCauley at [mark-mccauley@iaswcd.org](mailto:mark-mccauley@iaswcd.org). (8:30 a.m.-1:15 p.m.)
- 03-08-06 SE Area Meeting, North Vernon Library, North Vernon
- 03-08-06 Vegetative Options for Stormwater Management Workshop, InTech Park Conf Center, 6325 Digital Way, Indianapolis. Register by **March 1** for \$35 per person, which includes lunch. Contact: Hoosier Heartland RC&D at 317-290-3250 or Marion County SWCD at 317-780-1765. (8:00 a.m.)
- 03-15-06 Multi-county Crop Production Workshop, Eagles Nest Event Center, Columbia City for \$10 and additional \$10 for PARP & CCH credits. Call the SWCD in Allen, Huntington, Kosciusko, or Whitley County for reservations by **March 8**. (8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.)
- 03-16-06 State Technical Committee Meeting, NRCS State Office Conference Room, Indianapolis (1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.)
- 03-16-06 Dearborn County SWCD No-till Meeting, Agner Hall, Lawrenceburg Fairgrounds. Make reservations by **March 10** with Vickie Smith at [Vickie-smith@iaswcd.org](mailto:Vickie-smith@iaswcd.org) or 812-926-2406, ext. 3. (6:00 p.m.)
- 03-28-06 NW Area Meeting (location to be determined)
- 03-29-06 SW Area Meeting, Greene County Fairgrounds, Switz City

### April

- 04-08-06 Indiana Project WET Wetlands Workshop, Columbus/Bartholomew County Recycling Center. Cost \$15. Register with Marie at [nrec@dnr.in.gov](mailto:nrec@dnr.in.gov) or 317-562-1338.

### August

- 08-09-06 Indiana State Fair, Indianapolis  
to  
08-20-06

Note: For a listing of Natural Resources Education Center workshops, go to [www.in.gov/dnr/nrec](http://www.in.gov/dnr/nrec)