



In This Issue

- Heart to Heart with Hardisty
- Employee Spotlight—Mike Wigginton
- Hoosier Happenings
- June 2008 Flood
- Partners' Web Links
- Personnel Updates
- Featured Website—Indiana Conservation Partnership
- Mark Your Calendar

*Heart to Heart
... with Hardisty*



 The 2008 Indiana State Fair was quite successful with 108,000 more in attendance than last year. Our NRCS exhibit at the Pioneer Our Land Pavilion and the conservation partnership's Pathway to Water Quality drew a large number of fairgoers. I want to thank all who volunteered to staff the exhibits. With your help, we were able to share information about NRCS and our conservation messages.

 The June floods hit Indiana hard and many are still trying to recover. NRCS has provided, and continues to provide, help to a large number of Hoosier landowners through technical assistance and the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program. I extend a big thank you to the NRCS employees who are diligently working with landowners who were impacted by the unprecedented flood disaster.

 While the flooding issues have taken priority, we do have a new Farm Bill to implement. The rules are currently being written, and we need to be ready for the Farm Bill changes and opportunities as soon as they are completed. As we near the end of another fiscal year, I encourage our field staff to obligate our current Farm Bill program dollars and get the conservation practices slated to be installed on the ground.

 Finally, as I've visited several counties this summer it was encouraging to see many conservation practices that are preventing erosion, benefiting water quality, and that withstood the flood; largely due to the dedication and hard work of our NRCS employees. Thank you!

Jane E. Hardisty

*** * * * Employee Spotlight * * * ***
Mike Wigginton,
Soil Data Quality Specialist, State Office

Q: Mike, how long have you worked for NRCS and have you always worked in Soils?

A: I started working for the agency in 1976 and have about 20 years of service. In 1983 I left the agency to pursue other interests for about 14 years, then returned in 1996. And yes, I have always worked in Soils and love it!

Q: We understand you have some international work experience. Would you share a little about it?

A: I worked for the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) for six years in Ohio. Some of the Purdue and IU alums might consider that international experience! Then my true international travels began. For three years my wife and I worked with the Mennonite Central Committee as advisors to the Remote Area Dweller project for the government of Botswana, Africa. We worked with the San people, or as some call them, “Bushmen.” My wife and I also worked with the Mennonite Board of Missions in Argentina for about seven years. Our work there was with Native Americans, visiting churches and communities. We were involved in Bible teaching, literacy efforts, land rights advocacy, and other projects. We also spent about eight months in Bolivia learning Spanish.

As a USDA employee, I also did one short detail for USDA in El Salvador.

Q: Tell us the languages you speak as a result of your foreign travels.

A: I’m fairly fluent in Spanish and still retain a bit of Setswana (Botswana), Toba and Mocovi (Native American languages).

Q: Aside from the time you spend at work, what are some of your hobbies or other activities that take up your time?

A: I enjoy hunting, bicycling, playing guitar and mandolin, and maintaining my fleet of cars. Since family is very important to me, it seems I also spend a lot of time keeping track of my kids. Here’s a quick update.

—The last two of our three children graduated from

college this spring. They all attended small colleges and the “sticker price” for their education actually exceeded my income for three of the five years they were in college. (Grants and loans are a good thing!)

—Our oldest daughter, who now lives in California, was born in Botswana. At one point she was dubbed the “whitest African American” on her Pike High School volleyball team. She lived on three continents by the time she was three.

—Our son left mid-August to work in Bolivia for a year as a choir and orchestra director. We hope to visit him there in 2009.

—My youngest daughter was the only child to choose Environmental Science. I would take them all with me to do soils consulting work. At one point they all agreed that they didn’t know what job they would like to do, but they knew that they didn’t want to be a soil scientist!



Pictured above: Mike Wigginton (far right) works with students at a Youth Conservation Field Day.

Q: What has been the most rewarding project you’ve worked on at the agency?

A: There have been many different types of projects over the years. But, the most rewarding was doing the soil mapping for Licking County, Ohio. It was also a very rewarding experience to travel to El Salvador and talk with the local folks to help with the follow-up recovery efforts from Hurricane Mitch.

Hoosier Happenings

KUDOS to...

****Darrell Nicholson** for developing a CRP tour in Decatur County. As required by the Farm Service Agency's Deputy Administrator, County Executive Directors and Program Technicians needed field training and a tour of CRP practices to enhance their knowledge of the practices to more effectively communicate with landowners on the benefits of re-enrolling expiring practices. Darrell was provided the concept, a short time frame, and a blank canvass; and he painted a memorable work of art for us. — Terry Weigle, FSA District Director for Indiana District 6

****Brienne Lowe** for receiving the Indiana Wildlife Federation (IWF) Soil Conservationist of the Year award this summer. Tech Team Leader Neil Deckard submitted Brienne, soil conservationist on the Rensselaer Tech Team, for the award because of her impressive work on wetlands. Congrats Brienne!—Chris Torp, NRCS Soil Conservationist, Crawfordsville

****Kimberly Neumann and Sherm Liechty** for their support and involvement in the Eagle Marsh wetlands. Also, thank you **Jane Hardisty** for your warm endorsement of the Little River Wetlands Project and its wetland restorations during your presentation at this year's Eagle Marsh Open House. — Betsy Yankowiak, Executive Director of Little River Wetlands Project (LRWP)



Above, left to right: NE Area Conservationist Kimberly Neumann, State Conservationist Jane Hardisty, District Conservationist Sherman Liechty

EAGLE MARSH—THIRD LARGEST INDIANA WETLAND

The largest of the three wetland preserves in the Little River valley southwest of Fort Wayne is Eagle Marsh, encompassing 705 acres. At the Little River Wetlands Project open house this summer, NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty presented a replica of the Eagle Marsh wetlands sign that will be installed soon on site.

YODER'S FARM RECEIVES PERMANENT PROTECTION

The Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D began in 1994 with a primary goal of preserving farms, woodlands, pastures, prairies, and wetlands for future generations. They now hold conservation easements to accomplish their goal in Allen, St. Joseph, Whitley, LaGrange, Steuben, and Elkhart counties. One of these easements was granted to Elkhart County Commissioner Mike Yoder and his wife for 70 acres of their farm. The Yoders own Crystal Valley Dairy Farms, consisting of 450 dairy cows and 230 acres of cropland used to produce corn and soybeans. Yoder stated that he hoped his actions would encourage other farmers in the community to protect their land from development, too.

CHECK IT OUT

—*Partners*, a quarterly publication of the Conservation Technology Information Center, is now online at <http://www.conservationinformation.org/partners/> for your convenience.

—The summer issue of the *Hoos-Your Grazing* newsletter is available on the Web. Just go to <http://www.blueboniff.com/hoos-your-news.pdf> and enjoy!

RC&D PARTICIPATES IN FESTIVAL

As one of 40 exhibitors, the Hoosier Heartland RC&D participated in this year's Forecastle Festival, known as the Midwest's largest gathering of musicians, artists, and environmentalist. The RC&D featured two of their largest projects, Plant A Million trees and the Rural Entrepreneur Network, along with information about other conservation programs and services available through NRCS and SWCDs. This festival in Louisville, Kentucky, provided a great opportunity to disseminate conservation messages to a nontraditional audience.

(more on page 4)

Hoosiers Happenings (cont.)

AMISH PRODUCER HOSTS PASTURE WALK

Sylvan Schwartz, a Swiss Amish producer, hosted the first Adams County Pasture Walk this summer for 22 producers. After Adams County Resource Specialist Katy Stoller made introductions, NRCS Grazing Specialist Jerry Perkins spoke to the group about the concept of Management Intensive Grazing. (Below)



Adams County Ag Educator Brad Kohlhagen then discussed identifying weeds that tend to invade pastures and their potential hazards. This led to an open discussion time among the producers who had questions regarding grazing. Those involved look forward to the next pasture walk after having such a successful initial event.

PHOTO CONTEST UNDERWAY

Do you have an eye for photography? The Indiana State Department of Agriculture Division of Soil Conservation (ISDA-DSC) invites you to participate in the 2008 Indiana Conservation State Photo Contest. Contest winners will have their winning photographs professionally framed and featured in the Indiana Conservation State Photo Gallery exhibit at a venue to be announced in the fall of 2008. All images and entry forms must be submitted electroni-

cally to cgoode@isda.in.gov or mailed in on CD to ISDA Photo Contest, 101 W. Ohio Street, Suite 1200, Indianapolis, IN 46204. Entries must be received by September 30, 2008. For more information, go to the ISDA Web site at www.in.gov/isda and click under "Features."

A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Mary Lee Smith, Dave King, and Keela Deaton hosted a planning and surveying training for nine newer partnership employees in Vanderburgh County. During their long day in the field, they covered engineering layout for WASCOB, Waterway, and Grade Stabilization Structure. Participants were taught how and where to position these practices and how to survey them for later design. The trainers explained the benefit and purpose of each of these engineering practices. Utilizing both older and newer technology for the training, participants compared the tools as they used measuring wheels, laser levels, and Total Station instruments.



Above, left to right: Jamie Seeman, Keela Deaton, Amanda Bough, Trish Dugas, Vince Pitstick, Blair Borries, Jaime Ordonez, and Dave King

PARTNERSHIP LINKS

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

ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue University - www.purdue.edu

Indiana Conservation Partnership

The June 2008 Flood



The intense rainfall between April 1 and June 8 brought with it unprecedented flooding to many counties in Indiana. By July 21, President Bush had declared 48 counties as Federal Disaster Areas, along with 27 contiguous counties. The floods caused major damage to stream banks impacting public services, exposed water and gas lines, levee breaks, debris in channels, gullies, private dam failures, etc. Many crop fields were destroyed. Crops that were not washed out were at risk of emergence failure due to dense surface crusting of soil; mud deposition on plants causing stress and reduced photosynthesis; periods of saturated soils effecting the vigor of the crop; and significant losses of soil nitrogen due to flooding and ponding that causes denitrification and leaching of nitrate N.



One of the most amazing results of the flood was the creation of a new 1,700-acre island along the Wabash River in Posey County. The landowner has lost access to what was primarily farmland, and is now isolated by a wide, deep new channel. Formerly called Mackey Bend, the new land feature has been renamed Mackey Island.

NRCS stepped in to help communities and landowners with technical assistance and financial assistance

through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program. To date, 16 EWP exigency projects are complete for about \$560,000. There are seven more exigency projects underway, for an additional \$1.8 million. Currently, 32 requests have been received for non-exigency projects, with many more anticipated.

After an initial assessment, NRCS staff found that the 57 PL-566 dams in the flooded areas all withstood the flooding without failure. These dams were designed by the NRCS engineering staff.



State Conservationist Jane Hardisty was pleased at the minimal damage she saw to properly installed conservation practices. However, farmers with damage to conservation practices were encouraged to contact their local NRCS office for assessment. Indiana NRCS received \$1 million in funding for doing repairs to flood damaged conservation practices installed under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and another \$15,000 for those installed under the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

Updates are posted to the Indiana NRCS Web site at <http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/EWP/EWPhomepage.html> with a link from the homepage. Also, NRCS produced two guide sheets that lay out recommendations for reclaiming flood damaged fields and have posted these on the EWP Web site.



PERSONNEL UPDATE

Selections:

Stephen Baldwin, Contracting Officer, State Office, effective 07-20-2008
Cory Wolfe, Agricultural Engineer, SW Area Office, effective 08-03-2008
Duane Riethman, Agricultural Engineer, NE Area Office, effective 08-03-2008
Jeff Cannaday, Agricultural Engineer, NW Area Office, effective 08-17-2008
Edwin Sprunger, Soil Conservationist, Angola, effective 08-31-2008

Retirement:

David Elgin, Four Rivers RC&D, Petersburg, effective 08-30-2008

Featured Web Site—Indiana Conservation Partnership

<http://www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html>



NEWS!! The Indiana Conservation Partnership Web site has moved and is now hosted on the IASWCD site at the address above. An added attraction to the new site, visitors have access to a Google-based Search engine to find information on conservation and natural resources in Indiana.

Mark Your Calendar

August

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| 08/25-26/08 | NW Area Wildlife Training, Jasper County |
| 08/26/08 | NW Area Meeting, Lafayette |
| 08/27-28/08 | SW Area Wildlife Training, Greene County |

September

- 09/01/08 LABOR DAY HOLIDAY
- 09/04/08 Indiana Civil Rights Committee Meeting, Indianapolis
- 09/04-6/08 Farm World Expo, Boone County Fairgrounds, Lebanon
- 09/09/08 NE Area Meeting, Columbia City
- 09/09/08 Cover Crop & Soil Quality Field Day, Wabash County SWCD—County Farm,
State Rd 13, Manchester Avenue Extended, Wabash. **Register by September 3rd**
at 260-563-7486, ext. 3.
- 09/10/ 08 SE Area Meeting, North Vernon
- 09/13/08 No-Till & Pasture/Livestock Management Field Day, Adam Hill’s Farm, 2530 W
CR 500 N, Orleans, IN. **Register before September 5** at 812-723-3311, ext. 3.
- 09/18/08 Conservation Field Day (Trees, Ponds, & Wildlife), Gladys Russell Wildlife Park,
White Plains Road, Dearborn County. **Register by September 16th** at 812-926-
2406, ext. 3
- 09/22-26/08 National RC&D Week
- 09/23/08 State Technical Committee Meeting, Indianapolis
- 09/24/08 SW Area Meeting, Vincennes
- 09/25/08 Historic Hoosier Hills RC&D Project Tour. Register at 812-689-6410 or
hhhills@seidata.com
- 09/30/08 NW Area Meeting, Lafayette

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

Helping People Help the Land