



# Hoosier



# Headlines

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## Heart to Heart ... with Hardisty



You will be reading and hearing from all the news and social media sources various kinds of proposals and predictions about how Congress will deal with the Nation's deficit over the next few months. My advice is to stay in tune with the issue, but do not concern yourself until final decisions are made.

We find ourselves still working within a Continuing Resolution until March 4, which has occurred numerous times in the past. After March 4, we should have a better knowledge of the funds we have to work with for the remainder of this fiscal year. We feel confident that we will have some budgetary cuts within the Agency; therefore, the Leadership Team will be very cautious about their spending. Again, we will wait to see what the future brings. In the meantime, we will continue to do our jobs and serve the great people of Indiana.



*Jane E. Hardisty*

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

**Tyler Staggs,  
District Conservationist**

**Q:** Tyler, to get to know you better would you please give us some background as to how you became interested in conservation work?

**A:** My intention in going to college was to become a forensic chemist. The day before I was to sign up for classes a speaker gave a presentation to the incoming freshman class. His main message was that anyone who is great at something is doing something that they love. I decided that my love of being outdoors and participating in those activities was greater than my desire to be mistaken for a meat cutter by having to always wear a white lab coat. The next day I signed up for classes to pursue a major in biology.

**Q:** As a native Hoosier, what took you to Utah and then back to Indiana?

**A:** I went to Utah for graduate school. My plan was to complete my Master's degree, proceed on to a PhD and become a college professor. Coming from a very small college my view of the lifestyle that professors lead was probably a bit skewed. Seeing the lifestyle led by those at a larger, land grant university helped me to decide that it was not a good one for me. Plus, in conducting my thesis research I discovered I really like doing the work and participating in conservation at a hands on level. Thus, I was fortunate to get a job with the Bureau of Land Management in Utah to do just that. However, both my wife and I are from Indiana, so we were quite some distance from family. Being a young, carefree, globe-trotting wannabe couple this was not much of an issue. We then added to our family with one and then a second son. After the birth of my first son, my dad became ill and passed away at the too young age of 58. He only got to see his grandson three times before passing. We decided that we needed to be closer to family and came back to Indiana after accepting a job with the NRCS. This allows for the best of both worlds; we are close enough to be able to regularly visit with family, and I still get to be involved in conservation at a hands on level. Thank you to Kimberly Neumann and the NRCS for allowing us that opportunity.

**Q:** We understand you had a little delay on your start date with NRCS.

**A:** Yes, my reporting date had to be pushed back due to the birth of our second son, Kellen Joseph, who was born on June 28<sup>th</sup> of last year. My wife preferred having a bit of time in Utah after the birth and the guarantee of having the baby in the hospital versus alongside the interstate some-

where in Middle America. I greatly appreciate the understanding of the NRCS in this matter, and that accommodation was my first glimpse into the high regard of family that the agency holds for its employees.



**Q:** Do you have any hobbies or special interests?

**A:** As I stated earlier, I enjoy doing just about anything out of doors. Though I consider it a hobby, my wife would contend that I border on fanatical in my pursuit of hunting. One of the great things about being back in Indiana is I can now more easily and more regularly pursue my hobbies in the places where I learned to love those hobbies. Aside from hunting, I enjoy watching baseball and football at all levels of competition. I greatly look forward to sharing in these activities with my sons, Spencer and Kellen, and, hopefully, teaching them the love for and the "how-to's" of these interests. As much free time as I can spare, I never shy away from a good book. Reading is something I learned to love as a youngster and to this day still enjoy reading. No matter what I am doing, doing it with my wife and kids makes doing anything, even if that is nothing, all the better.

**Q:** Have you set some long term goals for yourself?

**A:** My first long term goal, as a newcomer to the NRCS, is to be able to know what the practices are by their code and not having to look it up! Though generic sounding, my main goal is to just do my job as well as possible. Indiana is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and interesting places. I will consider it a career well done if I can help to conserve those resources and places while never forgetting that the use of them is what makes Indiana the great state it is. I'm glad to say, that when someone asks, "Who'sh 'ere" (Hoos-ier), I can answer, "Me"!

## Hoosier Happenings

### KUDOS to...

\*\***Jennifer Chen** for solely and happily working the Indiana NRCS booth at the Indiana Farm Bureau Conference in December. Thank you, Jennifer, for representing us well!

\*\***Dave Stratman** for giving an excellent presentation on Indiana's Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) successes at the Certified Crop Advisors' Conference. Dave highlighted how Indiana's WRP enrollments have resulted in large connected habitat blocks throughout the state, and the wildlife response has been tremendous.

### NRCS Recognized by TNC

Mary McConnell, Director of The Nature Conservancy's Indiana Chapter, recognized several NRCS employees at the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts' Annual Conference for their contributions to wetland restoration work along the Wabash River. She commended NRCS and its work with local landowners to restore and string together "pearls" of wetland habitat, which has paved the way for the Governor's Wetland Initiative.

District conservationists that were a part of the Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program along the Wabash were presented a framed picture of a sunrise over the Wabash River. A commendation on the back of the picture read, "For your work to protect the Wabash River, for the benefit of the people of Indiana and the natural systems and species that rely on a healthy watershed," and was signed by Mary McConnell. The honored district conservationists included Ben Lambeck, Andrew Brown, Don Donovan, Eddy Adams, Tammy Swihart, Travis Gogel, Bill Norfleet, and Tom Held. State Conservationist Jane Hardisty and Jill Reinhart, Assistant State Conservationist, also received recognition for their contributions.

### Steuben County SWCD Receives Top Honor

Congratulations to Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), this year's recipient of the NACD National Conservation Foundation: Conservation District Project Award. The award, presented at the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Annual Meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, includes a \$10,000 grant. The District will use

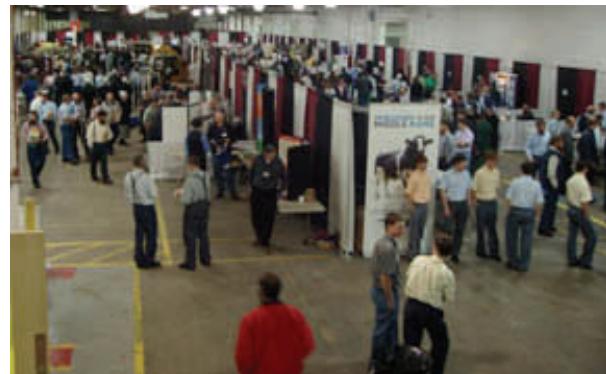
the grant to implement their **RISE Up to Reduce Your Storm Water, Communities Building Rain Barrels** program. The National Conservation Foundation seeks "on-the-ground" projects that touch local communities, and Steuben County SWCD's rain barrel project will do just that. "The District will use the grant to install approximately 200 rain barrels throughout the county," said SWCD Administrative Coordinator Kayleen Hart.

### Schmidt for President

Hoosiers took the spotlight at the NACD Annual Meeting in Tennessee. Indiana's own Gene Schmidt, LaPorte County SWCD and former IASWCD president, was elected to serve as the NACD president. Schmidt takes his post with a list of Farm Bill principles that outline the direction that NACD wants to take with the 2012 Farm Bill and with the organization's five-year strategic plan.

### Grazing Conferences Held

The **Northern Indiana Grazing Conference** was held on February 4 at the Michiana Event Center near Howe, Indiana. This new venue worked well providing room for the 700 attendees, lower noise level, more room for breakout sessions, and ample room for the 83 exhibitors with room to expand.



Sessions were held on topics that included harvesting for nutrition, making the most of your farms capability, a farmer panel on how to handle multiple situations, bull safety, and record keeping. The evening session discussed youth involvement on the farm leading to the transition to the next generation.

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## Special Emphasis— Black History Month

This month we focus on recalling and celebrating a unique part of our American history and the roles of African American figures in shaping what our country is today. History teaches us that every culture and every society endures good and bad, and it is essential that we continue to learn from our past.

From slavery abolitionists like Harriet Tubman to civil rights activists like Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—even students like the Little Rock Nine who showed unimaginable courage—we have much to learn from the lives of these past and present leaders. They leave quite a mark on the pages of our history books.

During this month, it is important that we seek to learn more about historical Black figures who show us the great contributions they made during an era when many people thought Blacks had nothing to offer. Quite the contrary, the African American community has given us some of our greatest writers, inventors, athletes, philosophers, musicians, and spiritual and community leaders during those dark times in our history.

I encourage you to visit one of the following Web sites to find links to online resources about Black history.

<http://search.eb.com/blackhistory/>  
<http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/BHM/AfroAm.html>  
<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bhm.html>

Contact: Daniel Phillips, Black Special Emphasis Program Manager, by email at [daniel.phillips@in.usda.gov](mailto:daniel.phillips@in.usda.gov) or by phone at 317/290-3200, ext. 371.

### **PARTNERSHIP LINKS**

- IN Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, *Weekly Updates*: [www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html](http://www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html)
- IN Conservation Partnership: [www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html](http://www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html)
- IN Dept. of Environmental Management: [www.in.gov/idem](http://www.in.gov/idem)
- IN Dept. of Natural Resources: [www.in.gov/dnr](http://www.in.gov/dnr)
- IN State Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation: <http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>
- Purdue University: [www.purdue.edu](http://www.purdue.edu)
- USDA Farm Service Agency: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

## Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

The second annual **Southern Indiana Grazing Conference** was held February 3rd at the Simon J. Graber Community building near Odon with over 300 attendees, representing six states. Participants listened to three outstanding speakers, including Kit Pharo from the Pharo Cattle Company of Cheyenne Wells, Colorado; Steve Wallace of Vinton, Iowa; and Blaine Hitzfield representing Seven Sons Cattle of Roanoke, Indiana.

**Kit Pharo** built his ranch on the philosophies designed for sustainability resulting in a consistently profitable cow-calf business, something rarely seen year in and year out among beef producers today. Pharo



stated, “Agriculture that is not profitable and enjoyable will never be sustainable.” **Steve Wallace** works as territory manager for Forage Products for Barenbrug Seed and also has his own grass based cattle farm. He preached, “Yes you can finish beef cattle on grass.” **Seven Sons** believe that natural grass-fed beef is the world’s most nutritious beef, because it is ‘real beef’ produced the way it was meant to be...on natural green grass. The change over from row crops and swine to grass finished beef and other farm based marketable products will keep the seven sons on the farm.

### **Print Makes Scholarship Money**

The Indiana Land Improvement Contractors Association (INLICA) held an auction recently that raised \$3,000 for scholarship funds. One of the items sold for \$600 was a framed print with historical NRCS conservation images and that was created by INLICA members John and Frieda Pickering. The Pickerings worked with Mike McGovern and Tom Bechman (Indiana Prairie Farmer) on permissions for the images and the story content. FRATCO bought the print and will hang it in their Francesville office.

## **Earth Team Volunteer Recognition**

### **NE Area Earth Team Volunteer (ETV)**

Group recognition goes to **John M. Craddock Wetland Nature Preserve Team (Delaware County)**; also received the 2010 National ETV Group Award.

The John M. Craddock project is an extensive partnership of diverse groups in the community including the Red-Tail Conservancy, Flatland Resources LLC, Muncie Sanitary District, Ball State University, Pheasants Forever, Cardinal Greenway, and local residents. The Delaware County SWCD manages grant funding for the project and, with Flatland Resources, is coordinating construction of the wetland, boardwalks, signage, and fencing; as well as all plantings and weed/invasive plant control. Ball State University landscape architecture students work as ETVs to design and complete building of the boardwalks and structures to enhance public access to the Nature Preserve. The students have volunteered over 3,400 hours to the project and are not yet finished. The University and the District at first had concerns with the students participating in the project because of liability, but participation in the ETV program covers liability for the students and gives them valuable hands-on learning experience in their field of study. —Submitted by Kevin Shide, NE Area ETV Coordinator, and Debra Carpenter (Delaware County SWCD)

### **NW Area Earth Team Volunteer**

Indiana NRCS recognizes Earth Team Volunteer **Frederick K. Zahrt (Arrow Head RC&D)**.

During the past year, Frederick K. Zahrt, a member of the Winamac Tree Committee, has voluntarily worked to oversee the planting and maintenance of 1,500 tree sites around the Town of Winamac. These trees are in addition to the 7,000 planted over the past ten years to restore the beauty along the streets of this historic town. A constant vigil is required to remove trees that have died due to damage by natural causes and replace them with trees appropriate to the planting location. Zahrt has used every means possible to see that this ongoing project continues by enlisting many community members, organizations, and youth groups. His goal is not to draw attention to himself, but to organize and give support to this community project. An example of a committed volunteer, Zahrt informs the community when workdays are scheduled, and enlists volunteers who want to help, no matter what their skill level. —Submitted by Michaela Stout, NW Area ETV Coordinator, and Nancy Manion, Arrow Head RC&D

## **RC&D Secures 20th Land Easement**

The Wood-Land-Lakes Resource Conservation and Development, Inc. (RC&D), based in Angola, Indiana, has made a concerted effort to protect the rich farmland in northeast Indiana. RC&D Coordinator Kathy Latz said, “The Land Committee formed in 1994 with the goal of preserving the area’s working farmland. In late December 2010, the RC&D completed its 20th conservation easement.” With these agreements in place, 20 Indiana farms will be protected from future development.

Landowner Annie Sanders recently worked with the Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D to preserve her wooded land in LaGrange County. Sanders wanted to see the family farm protected from further subdivision and the building of additional residential structures. She plans to manage the woodland as a productive woods and

for watershed protection into the Pigeon River. In 2003, Sanders donated an agricultural conservation easement on 140 acres of adjacent cropland northwest of Howe, Indiana.

Sanders states that this property has a great appeal to her, her children, and members of their extended family. “Protecting it permanently will give us a greater peace of mind about its future and, I believe, be a benefit to the community as well as the neighborhood,” she said.

The farm will still be privately owned and managed. The Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D will be the permanent guardian or holder of the conservation easement and will monitor the woods annually. For more information, contact the RC&D at [office@wood-land-lakes.org](mailto:office@wood-land-lakes.org) or (260) 665-3211, ext. 5.

## **Personnel Update**

Selections:

Randy Dickson, Arrowhead Country RC&D Coordinator, Winamac, effective 1/2/2011

Cindy Muffett, District Conservationist, Monticello, effective 1/2/2011

Celia Tharp, District Conservationist, Winamac, effective 1/2/2011

Retirements:

Jim Dunaway, Soil Conservationist, Indianapolis, effective 12/31/10

Doug Daggy, Soil Conservationist, Aurora, effective 12/31/10

Michelle Phillips, RC&D Assistant, Greencastle, effective 1/31/11

Career Appointment:

Seth Harden, Student Trainee converted to Soil Conservationist, Salem, effective 1/2/11

Reassignments:

Patrick Chase, Soil Scientist, NRCS, Iowa, effective 1/30/11

Keela Deaton, District Conservationist, NRCS, Sundance, WY, effective 2/27/11

## **Featured Web Site — NRCS Distribution Center**

**[www.nrcs.usda.gov/distributioncenter](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/distributioncenter)**

LANDCARE has recently undergone some changes, including a name change to the NRCS Distribution Center. Along with the name change, the Web address is now <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/distributioncenter>, where visitors can view and order national NRCS publications. Though their phone number remains 1-888-562-3227, their email address has changed to [NRCSDistributioncenter@ia.usda.gov](mailto:NRCSDistributioncenter@ia.usda.gov) to reflect the name change. Check out new items by typing “new” in the Search box. **Be a Friend to Pollinators** is a new brochure you’ll want to have on hand!



## **Mark Your Calendar**

February

02/21/11 PRESIDENTS' DAY

02/23/11 Leadership Team Meeting

02/24/11 WRP Training

02/24-25/11 Conservation Tillage & Technology Conference, Ada, OH

02/28/11 NW Area Meeting, Lafayette

**March**

- 03/01/11 NE Area Meeting  
03/07/11 Ag Day at the Statehouse, Indianapolis  
03/08/11 State Soil Conservation Board/State Technical Committee Meeting  
03/09/11 SE Area Meeting, North Vernon  
03/14-18/11 NASIS Training, Indianapolis  
03/20-26/11 NOPBNRCSE 2011 Training/Conference, Atlanta, GA  
03/23/11 Leadership Team Meeting  
03/29/11 NW Area Meeting, Lafayette  
03/30/11 SW Area Meeting

**April**

- 04/05/11 NE Area Meeting  
04/13/11 SE Area Meeting  
04/11-15/11 SE Area Review  
04/18-22/11 MO Leaders Meeting  
04/26/11 NW Area Meeting  
04/27/11 SW Area Meeting  
04/28/11 Indiana Soil Scientists Meeting, Indianapolis

*Helping People Help the Land*