

NEWS RELEASE



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Natural Resources Conservation Service Provides Guidance to Restore Flooded Fields

INDIANAPOLIS, July 31, 2008—Splashing in mud puddles, making mud pies and scratching around in the dirt is a rite of passage for kids all over Indiana, but dirt isn't just child's play. Technically called soil, it is one of the most valuable resources on the planet, and the June floods scoured it from fields, carried it away downstream, and left Indiana farmers with barren areas where productive agricultural lands once stood.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing guidance to producers trying to rebuild their soil after the floods. NRCS State Agronomist Barry Fisher recommends putting down manure and a cover crop where lands have lost topsoil. "Not only have you lost the soil, but you've lost all the biology in that soil that makes it productive for growing crops. Your earthworms, the microorganisms...everything was washed away," he said. "You've got to get some soil biology back into the land." Fisher explains that the floodwaters also caused compaction in fields, and cover crop roots can start to loosen up these areas.

NRCS has produced two Guide Sheets that lay out the recommendations for reclaiming flood damaged fields. Titled, "Soil Quality Reclamation for Spring Flood Damaged Fields" and "Cover Crops to Reclaim Soil Quality in Flood Damaged Fields," both are available on the NRCS Web site at <http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/EWP/EWPhomepage.html>.

"Millions of tons of topsoil have been lost, and while we can work to reclaim some areas, others may never be productive lands again," said NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty. Hardisty is hopeful that the Floodplain Easement Program will receive funds to purchase these severely damaged areas and place them in permanent easements. "Floodplain easements provide flood retention areas, protect and maintain the functions of the floodplain, and ultimately safeguard lives and property from future flooding," said Hardisty. "At the same time, this program provides some compensation to the producer for their lost land."

For more information on reclaiming damaged soils, contact NRCS at your nearest USDA Service Center. Locations can be found at http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/field_offices.html.

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