

Decatur County **SOIL** & Water Conservation District



2024 ANNUAL REPORT



History of SWCD

The Decatur County SWCD was declared a district on January 2, 1964 at the request of county citizens who were interested in soil and water conservation, flood prevention and land use planning. The SWCD is a legal subdivision of state government, responsible for providing leadership for all conservation development of soil, water, and related natural resources for all of Decatur County. A district constitutes a governmental subdivision of the state and a public body corporate and politic exercising public powers (IC 14-32-5).

A board of five supervisors, who are acquainted with the resource needs and problems of the county, manage the SWCD. Landowners of the county elect three of the supervisors and the State Soil Conservation Board appoints two. The SWCD does not have the power to tax or bond, does not have the power of eminent domain, and does not have regulatory power. It cannot replace or duplicate functions of the other local government units. Financing SWCD operations is accomplished through a combination of appropriations from state and local government units, money earned by SWCD activities, and contributions from private sources.



2024 Staff

Jenna Nicholson SWCD District Coordinator has been with the district since 2008. As coordinator she serves as treasurer and event coordinator.

Scott Sanders SWCD Natural Resource Technician started in 2008 and provides conservation planning and technical assistance for agricultural lands.

Mike Hughes NRCS District Conservationist has been with the district since 2009, but has been with NRCS since 1999. He provides guidance to the conservation team and technical assistance to landowners.

Cassidy Perkins ISDA Resource Specialist joined the office in 2019. She covers Bartholomew, Decatur, Rush and Shelby counties providing technical assistance.

2024 Supervisors

Fred Fry, Chair
Gordon Smiley, Vice-Chair
Baron Deck
Tom Cherry
Roger Wenning



2024 Year in Review

The SWCD began 2024 with staff attending the IASWCD Annual Conference in Indianapolis. The Annual Meeting was held on February 5th at the Knights of St John Hall in Greensburg with Hans Kok sharing facts about the difference in agriculture in the US and Holland. A native plant sale was held in April. Two rain barrel and compost workshops were held in April and May with another 40 barrels given away. In May the 16th Annual Tree Giveaway was held at the fairgrounds. Over \$900 and a truck load of supplies were collected for the Animal Shelter. In June we hosted 80 elementary students for our Resource Recess Environmental Camp! They learned about natural resources, recycling, native plants, getting outside, germs and more! September was a busy month as the SWCD took over coordinating the Ag Day Fair for the local 5th grade students. We 350 fifth grades students, 50 FFA students, 75 teachers and chaperons, and 50 presenters, volunteers, SWCD and Farm Bureau workers at the fairgrounds to learn about all things agriculture! A pasture walk was held on Baron Deck's farm at the end of September for a day of forage evaluation and discussion. In October the staff attended the Indiana District Employee Association Conference. Throughout the year, staff worked on promoting the Clean Water Indiana Grant - Keep the Lights on Pollinators as well as other conservation programs. In between events, staff conducted 165 status reviews checking waterways, filterstrips and wildlife plots under CRP contracts.

2024 Award Recipients:

*Friend of Conservation: **Tom Bechman***

*Conservation Farmer of the Year: **Baron Deck***

*River Friendly Farmer Award: **Matt Raver & Robert Dawson***

2024 was a successful year and we are looking forward to what 2025 holds!

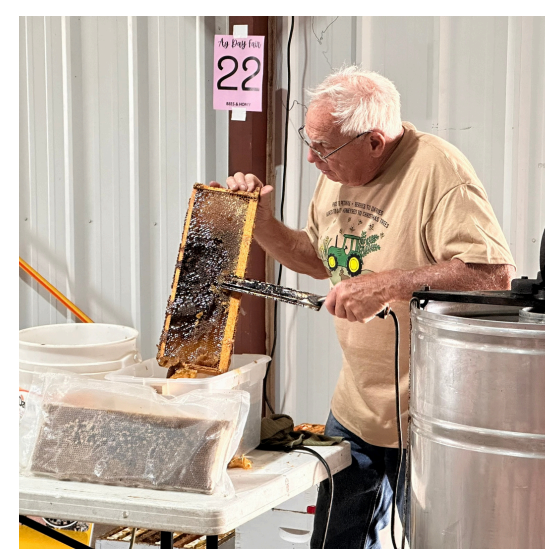
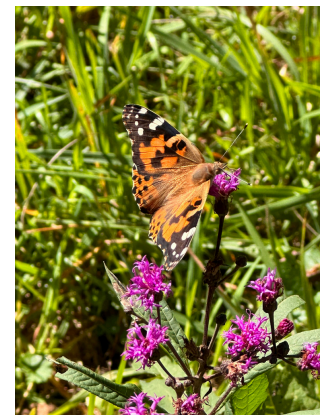
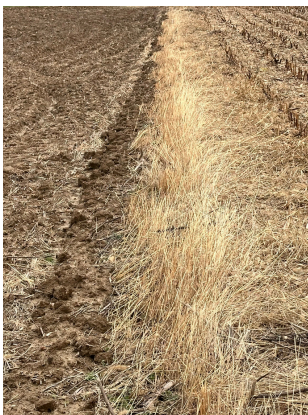
Visit our new website to keep up with upcoming events!

<https://www.decaturoswcd.org/>

Follow us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/DecaturCountySWCD>







The Decatur, Franklin, and Ripley County SWCDs received a Clean Water Indiana Grant to help local landowners install pollinator habitats, replace invasive shrubs and educate on the importance of native pollinator habitats.

The grant allows the SWCDs to:

- provide seed to convert ground to native plant gardens for pollinator habitats
- replace invasive shrubs on residential property with a native pollinator friendly shrub
- provide education on the importance of pollinators, planting and maintaining pollinator habitats, and the importance of native plants
- create a demonstration plot behind the Decatur County SWCD office with a manicured planting area as well as a prairie-like area

NATIVE POLLINATOR PLANTINGS

Help our native pollinators by increasing their habitat with beneficial, native plants by converting ground to native plant gardens.

Seed:

Plant up to 2 acres with a seed mix from Applegate's Seed House with over 35 different flowers and grasses that are beneficial to pollinators.

- The grant provides the seed mix and technical assistance.
- You are responsible for site preparation, planting of seeds and maintenance.

Plugs:

Plant up to 1,000 sq/ft with native plant plugs from the Decatur County SWCDs spring Native Plant sale.

- The grant provides plugs for: 1 plug per 3 sq/ft.
- You are responsible for site preparation, planting of plugs, mulching around the plugs, and maintenance.

INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL

Help our native pollinators by increasing their habitat with beneficial, native shrubs.

Remove an invasive shrub in your residential landscape and replace it with a native pollinator friendly shrub from one of three local nurseries.

- The grant provides a voucher for a native shrub.
- You are responsible for removal of the invasive shrub, pick up and planting of the native shrub.

Invasive Shrubs:

- Burning Bush
- Callery or Bradford Pear
- European Highbush Cranberry
- Heavenly Bamboo
- Japanese Barberry
- Japanese Meadow Sweet
- Jet Bead
- Privet
- Rose of Sharon

Salt-Pipe Creek Watershed 2024 Review

The Salt-Pipe Creek Watershed Project is currently on its 2nd implementation grant. All of the cost-share money has been allocated to install best management practices (BMPs) throughout the watershed area during the grant period. There were 7 landowners/operators who utilized the cost-share program and completed their BMPs in 2024. The following practices were installed this year:



- Fence – 4,858'
- Hay Planting – 9.5 ac
- Heavy Use Areas – 5,550 sq ft
- Pipeline – 650'
- Water Tanks - 2
- Tree Planting – 1.3 ac
- Cover Crops – 2,178.6 ac

The installation of these practices will reduce the following loads from entering the streams in the watershed.

Sediment – **2,029 T/yr**

Phosphorus – **3,153 lbs/yr**

Nitrogen – **6,292 lbs/yr**

The Salt-Pipe Creek Watershed project and its partners held many educational events covering many different topics. Some of the topics covered included stream permit requirements for working in/around streams, stream movement, soil health, cover crops, precision farming, no-till, pesticide use, rotational grazing, carbon credits, crop rotation and much more.

Educational articles were also mailed out to landowners via the project's newsletters. The project will start transitioning away from the mailed newsletters to electronic newsletters in 2025. If you would like to continue to receive information about the watershed project, please send an email to Heather Wirth at heather.wirth@in.nacdnet.net to request being put on the electronic mailing list.