

Town & Country

Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District

Fall 2016

District Honored for Conservation Efforts



The Bundy Duck awarded for Exceptional Commitment to Conservation from the White River Alliance.

On September 27th the District was awarded the Exceptional Commitment to Conservation Award by the White River Alliance. This award honored the Backyard Conservation Program for demonstrating significant leadership in a focused area of resource conservation (water, materials and/or energy, land, etc.) “The award for this recognition was a beautiful Bundy Duck handcrafted right here in Hamilton County so that made this honor a little extra special” said Claire Lane, Urban Conservationist.

The District is also being honored by the Indiana Conservation Partnership with a District Showcase Award this year. Every year four SWCD’s from across the state are recognized for their accomplishments and commitment to conservation. On November 17th, the District will welcome guests from the Indiana Conservation Partnership and the general public for a short presentation covering the urban conservation program before a bus tour of urban conservation sites. This tour will showcase urban conservation practices such as turf grass to prairie conversions, rain gardens, native plantings, rain barrels, and urban agriculture. The event will begin at 9am at the John Hensel Government Center at 10701 College Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46280. As part of this award, the District will also be honored at the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation District’s Annual Conference in January 2017.

For readers of our electronic newsletter, please know that guests are welcome to join the District Showcase tour on Nov. 17th. Please RSVP to soil.water@hamiltoncounty.in.gov or 317-773-2181 by Nov. 11th. For print readers who will receive this notice later, look for a full recap with photos online.

Claire Lane, the District’s Urban Conservationist, was honored by the Indiana Urban Forest Council as their 2016 Outstanding Individual of the Year for promoting the principles of urban forestry in Indiana. This honor was awarded at the IFC’s Annual Conference at the Indianapolis Zoo on October 12th. “We’re so pleased to see Claire receive this recognition for her hard work,” said Ginger Davis, Hamilton County SWCD Administrator. “Her efforts have truly helped Hamilton County expand its urban forest canopy.”

Additionally, the Heartland Backyard Conservation Program, a partnership between Hamilton, Hancock, Madison, and Marion counties, was honored with a Green Light Award from Sustainable Indiana 2016. This program is part of a statewide bicentennial celebration of Hoosiers who are helping shape a more environmentally sustainable Indiana. The award was presented at the Central Indiana Region Award Ceremony at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis on September 15th.



Claire Lane was honored at the 2016 Indiana Urban Forest Council Conference.



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Urban Agriculture Associates

Town & Country

Published quarterly and distributed to landowners, farm operators, teachers, local agencies, public officials, conservation organizations and other interested individuals.

1717 Pleasant St. Suite 100
Noblesville, IN 46060
317-773-2181
soil.water@hamiltoncounty.in.gov

Hamilton County SWCD Receives 2017 Clean Water Indiana Grant

The Hamilton County SWCD and its partners received a 2017 Clean Water Indiana (CWI) Grant to help fund the purchase of a soil tunnel trailer. The trailer will be part of a significant soil and water quality education program for adults and children in Central Indiana communities and beyond. This unique trailer will be educational and hands on, virtual, three dimensional, museum quality, mobile, accessible for all, and bi-lingual.

“This trailer will really bring the world of soils to life,” said Ginger Davis, HCSWCD Conservation Administrator. “We are excited to partner with multiple organizations in Indiana to bring this education program to farmers, students, and the community as a whole.”

Attendees will walk through the trailer and spend various amounts of time in it. Up to 20 children can gather in the trailer for longer school presentations. Farmers, families and others will walk through it for a shorter amount of time at fairs and events. The trailer will utilize built-in visualizations along with mobile models for demonstration of runoff, soil health, soil formation, soil biology, and soil degradation.

“We greatly appreciate this grant,” said Rodney Rulon, HCSWCD Chairman. “We’re looking forward to using the soil trailer for future presentations to help everyone understand the important connection between soil and water.”

Meet our New Staff Members

The HCSWCD hired Ginger Davis as its new Conservation Administrator. Davis replaced John South, who retired in June after 38 years of service. Davis brings with her extensive



Master’s training in Civil Engineering and Hydrology, vast work experience with various SWCD’s around the state, a great deal of training through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and varied leadership experience. Among her many accomplishments, Davis is an Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy

Graduate, an Earth Science Adjunct Professor at Ivy Tech, and a past watershed coordinator for the Lost River Watershed Project in Orange County, IN. Her previous position was a Hydrogeologist with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources where she researched groundwater resources. Davis is also a certified floodplain manager as well as a licensed professional geologist.

Cara Culp is the new Urban Ag Outreach Specialist. Prior to being hired to work for Hamilton County, Culp worked as the Public Affairs Manager for the City of Noblesville for over 12 years. She researched, wrote, and edited communications, marketing, and public affairs documents and materials. Culp also performed community outreach and promoted city programs, services, and initiatives both locally and regionally. She and her husband Aaron are both graduates of Noblesville High School.



Andrew Fritz is the new Urban Ag Conservationist. Fritz serves as the founder and director of The Gleaning Garden, a community garden in Carmel that grows and gives away organic produce to local food pantries. He developed email and social media outreach initiatives, created a network of volunteers to help with The Gleaning Garden’s mission, and employed strategies in improving the soil and ecological health of the community garden site. Fritz is a former landscape architect and GIS analyst, with an emphasis in natural resources and environmental management.



Good for your Health, Caution for Infrastructure

Ginger Davis, Conservation Administrator

There is one incredible thing in the world that can provide improved cognitive and psychological benefits, improve air quality, reduce stress, reduce violence, conserve energy, reduce stormwater, prevent soil erosion, shield children from ultra-violet rays, provide food, increase property values, and provide other valuable resources. Would you be surprised to know these are just some of the benefits of trees?

Scientists have been investigating the health benefits of trees. Recently published by Nature in an open access journal, Scientific Reports research quantified just how much an addition of trees in a neighborhood enhances health outcomes. They found that “having 10 more trees in a city block, on average, improves health perception in ways comparable to an increase in annual personal income of \$10,000 and moving to a neighborhood with \$10,000 higher median income or being 7 years younger.”

Trees are an incredibly valuable resource, however, they can cause some undue headache and costly repairs without proper planning and precautions. With our aging infrastructure and new infrastructure in expanding urban areas, care needs to be taken when planting trees. Most sound pipes are able to withstand some amount of contact with tree roots. However, roots may penetrate or damage water pipes. Older pipes made of concrete or clay are particularly vulnerable to root penetration. If a pipe is leaking (by accident or perforated on purpose), tree roots will grow toward the water source, enter the pipe, and eventually clog it completely. The nutrient-rich water from leaky sewer pipes or cracked water lines acts like a magnet to the roots of some water-loving trees.

Choosing a suitable tree species and planning the site helps to protect water pipes. Certain trees should never be planted near water lines, as they are often fast-growing with particularly aggressive roots. Many species in the Acer (maple) genus, Willow family including poplar and cottonwood species, ashes, sycamore, several oaks, basswood, tulip tree, elms, birches, mulberry, and beeches are unsuitable for planting near water pipes and other underground or surface structures. Willow roots can spread out from the trunk up to three times the distance between the edge of the tree's foliage and its trunk. Weeping willows typically produce foliage that is between 45 and 70 feet wide at maturity with roots that can spread approximately 100 feet from the center of the trunk of large specimens.

Where feasible, a 15- to 25-foot setback between trees and perforated, water, or sewer pipes is suggested. A 10- foot setback should be considered for other utility lines for safety purposes. For the previously listed trees a larger setback would be desirable, or different choice of tree. Shallow-rooted herbaceous plants for areas over utility lines are also recommended. Geotextiles or other root barriers have been made to try and block or inhibit roots. However, these methods can often reduce the root stability and cause other problems, like uprooting during high wind events, especially as the tree grows in size.

Trees are a very important part of our environment and we want to encourage responsible tree planting. If you are thinking about planting some trees and need to develop a planting plan for the area you can call the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District for assistance. We can help with resources to locate service lines, help with species selection, and provide other planting resources. Additionally we have soil probes available to purchase from our office, which can be used to investigate where water lines may be located underground prior to planting. Remember to always call 811



Tree roots can plug up drainage pipes— large and small. Willow and birch tree roots can be particularly aggressive. Photos: Hamilton County Surveyor's Office



FFA's Compete in Recent Soil Judging Competition

Mark McCauley, Resource Conservationist

The recent soil judging competition between Hamilton and Boone County schools was held September 27th near Boxley, IN on the Harbaugh farm. If you are unfamiliar with "soil judging" competitions, it is basically an event where students examine local soil profiles and answer questions related to soil components, such as sand, silt, clay, texture, drainage class, fertility, suitable land uses, topography, etc. Four separate trenches are dug in different soils types/locations on the site and soil judging teams conduct hands-on tests and examinations at each of the four holes, completing individual test sheets. Students work alone and are not allowed to communicate with each other or their coaches until after the competition is completed. This year we had a good showing of students with six teams from four different school systems, Western Boone, Sheridan, Hamilton Heights, and Lebanon.



Students focus on their scorecards while waiting for a team member to finish her evaluation.

Recognitions are given to the top three teams and well as the high scoring individual. Coming in at first place with a total team score of 927 was Western Boone (team members Kevin Garst, Ellie Garst, Makena Jones, and Coach Travis Terhaar). The second place award goes to Sheridan FFA with a team score of 836 (teams members Lauren McKinney, Nolan Miller, Maggie Adams, Michael Reed, and Coach Scott Ison). The third place award goes to Hamilton Heights FFA with a team score of 774 (team members Kaleb Rulon, Brady Brennan, Katie Anderson, and Coach Emilie Carson). The top scoring individual of the competition was Makena Jones (Western Boone) with a score of 312.



Mike Wiggington, NRCS Soil Scientist, reviews each pit with the students while scorecards are being tallied.

This soil judging event is a collaborative effort between Hamilton and Boone County SWCD's, Purdue Cooperative Extension (Hamilton and Boone), 4-H, and local FFA's. We want to thank John Harbaugh for allowing us to use his farm for the competition, Co-Alliance for getting the soil pits dug, Neil Johnson for supplying the backhoe, and Mike Wiggington (NRCS Soil Scientist) for officiating.

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District supports soil judging competitions because we recognize the valuable skills that are learned by students – skills that will enable them to make wiser decisions in the future concerning the use and protection of our natural resources. Congratulations to all participants!

If you have questions about soils on your property give us a call at 317-773-2181. We can help you with a variety of mapping and reporting resources as well as soil testing.

Free Workshop Planned for Landscapers & HOAs on Neighborhood Stormwater Infrastructure Maintenance

The White River Alliance is hosting a free workshop on Thursday December 8th from 9-2 at the Monon Community Center in Carmel. You will learn about common green infrastructure features that are likely in your HOA common areas, maintenance agreement considerations, and more. This is a great opportunity for your HOA and/or landscaper to learn about the true function and proper maintenance of these sites. Learn more and register at www.thewhiteriveralliance.org.



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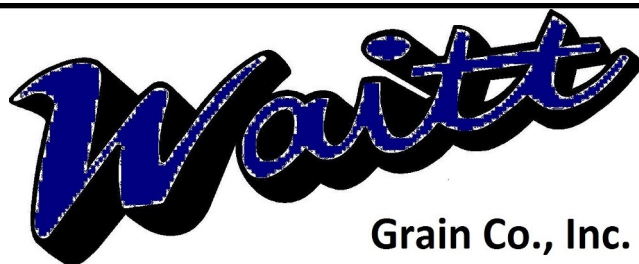
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Urban Conservation Spotlight

Claire Lane, Urban Conservationist



Tree Sale Success

The tree sale broke records again this year with over 800 trees sold! Over 170 individuals purchased native trees from the District this year. The income from the tree sale provides critical funding to support the District and our unique cost share and educational programs. Increases in promotion, species selection, and now online ordering have allowed the tree sale to grow almost 700% since 2012. Thanks to all who purchased trees through the sale and be on the lookout for info on the 2017 tree sale in July. As our tree sale grows, we find that many hands make light work when it comes to unloading nearly 1,000 trees and separating them into orders. Please consider volunteering for next year's tree sale. Email Claire.lane@hamiltoncounty.in.gov to be placed on an email list for volunteer opportunity notices.

Emerald Ash Borer and Asian Longhorn Beetle

Many of you have seen or felt the devastation of the emerald ash borer (EAB) on your property over the last few years. This shiny green insect pest was introduced to the US through wood packing materials on cargo ships and planes arriving from Asia. Since the early 2000s EAB has spread across the eastern US decimating populations of ash trees. Confirmed in Indiana in 2004, EAB larvae feed on the inner bark of ash trees eventually girdling and killing the tree. Many ash in Indiana have already been infected but there are treatments that can be applied to ash trees to protect them from EAB. Research shows that consistent treatment can save trees. Learn more about EAB at www.eabinidna.info. Follow "Neighbors Against Bad Bugs (NABB)" on Facebook for other timely and interesting info right in your newsfeed. Also remember that there are 140 known pests and pathogens, including EAB, that can be moved from place to place in firewood. Protect our public and private Hoosier forests by not moving firewood. Learn more at www.dontmovefirewood.org.



Top— adult EAB shown on penny.



Left— D shaped exit hole left by EAB.

Images: US Forest Service

If you didn't think EAB was bad enough, there is another non-native invasive insect threatening our forests and this one could have even more devastating affects. The Asian longhorn beetle (ALB) has been found in both Ohio and Illinois and is particularly threatening because it can target a variety of hardwood trees including maple, birch, willow, and elm. Adult female ALB's chew depressions into the bark of hardwood trees and lay an egg. Within 2 weeks, the egg hatches and starts feeding on tree tissue leading to the eventual death of the tree.



Image: www.maine.gov

Asian longhorn beetles are 1 to 1.5 inches long and have long black and white banded antennae. They have six legs and a shiny black body with white spots. Signs of damage in trees include 1/4 inch or larger perfectly round exit holes, chew marks on egg sites where the adults have created depressions in the tree, and sawdust like material called frass outside of the holes they have tunneled. You may find tunneling on fallen branches or when cutting wood. Most ALB damage is seen in the canopy so it may not be easy to notice. Weeping sap, unseasonable yelling of leaves, and dropped or dying branches are other warning signs. If you find an infestation of ALB, report it immediately on the USDA website

or call DNR at 1-866-663-9684. Our office or Purdue Extension can also help you report. Again, moving firewood can spread ALB so avoid doing so. While ALB has not yet been found in Indiana, early detection is key so stay vigilant to protect our trees!

Time for rain barrel winterization

Water sitting in your rain barrel over winter may ruin your rain barrel. Take a few moments to get yours ready for winter. Disconnect your rain barrel from your downspout— if you purchased a diverter from us, simply unscrew the silicone cup and spin it 180 degrees so the "cup" is upside down and doesn't collect water. Remove the tubing and store until spring. If you don't have a diverter, reattach the piece of downspout you cut off previously. If possible, rinse out your barrel and store it in a garage or basement. If that isn't possible, turn your barrel upside down and secure it against wind. A tarp is another layer of protection against the winter elements.

Urban Agriculture Program Connecting Gardeners in Hamilton County

Thanks to a grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), Andrew Fritz and Cara Culp were hired in September to help launch the SWCD's new Urban Agriculture program. Andrew is the Conservationist and will focus on providing technical expertise to urban gardeners. As Outreach Specialist, Cara will be providing education on urban agriculture with a special emphasis on helping coordinate local produce donations to county food pantries.



So what is Urban Agriculture? A basic definition describes it as growing and cultivating food in and around a city or town. The focus of the SWCD Urban Agriculture program will be on community gardens and backyard gardens. While urban agriculture has been mentioned a great deal in recent years, it is not a new concept. The Victory Gardens that were planted during World War II are an example of urban agriculture. Benefits of urban agriculture include families being able to supplement their grocery purchases with fresh food; people providing produce to help to feed food insecure families; and teaching valuable, lifelong skills to kids and adults.

As part of our NACD grant, one of our priorities will be on how we can help coordinate more local produce donations to county food pantries. Are you a backyard gardener who would like more information on how your excess produce can be donated to food pantries? Are you part of a community garden that doesn't currently donate to a food pantry, but you'd like to start doing so next year? If so, please contact Cara at cara.culp@hamiltoncounty.in.gov.

We will also be creating a Community Garden Network for managers and representatives of community gardens in Hamilton County so that we can offer free workshops, technical assistance, networking opportunities, and information on grant possibilities. Our hope is that the more successful a community garden is, the more likely they will be willing to donate excess produce. Or for gardens that already donate to food pantries, the more successful the garden is, the more produce they'll be able to donate. We've been compiling a list of gardens in Hamilton County, but if you know of any community, school, church, or neighborhood gardens in the county, please contact Andrew at Andrew.fritz@hamiltoncounty.in.gov.

Look for more details about the SWCD Urban Agriculture program in the next newsletter and on the website!

What is food insecurity?

Consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year. Food insecure households may be struggling to avoid hunger or faced by the threat of hunger.

Indiana's population of food insecure households is higher (15.3%) than the US average (12.7%).

Effects of food insecurity on children:

- Poor health: Kids who don't eat nutritious food are more susceptible to colds and the flu and therefore more likely to miss school.
- Behavioral issues at school: Being tired and having no energy because children haven't eaten or haven't eaten nutritious food makes them more likely to act up in class.
- Lower scholastic achievement: When children miss school due to sickness, have behavioral issues due to nutrition issues, or have growling stomachs, they aren't able to learn as well as their peers.
- Increased risk for physical problems later in life if proper nutrition isn't present in the formative years to help develop a healthy body and brain.

Effects of food insecurity on adults:

- Poor physical health—not just colds and the flu but also diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and more.
- Increased depression and anxiety
- Poor work performance: If you and/or your children are sick as a result of food insecurity and you have to stay home, you have a greater risk of losing your job due to chronic absenteeism.

Notice:

The November board meeting of the Hamilton County SWCD board will be held at 8am at the John Hensel Gov. Center at 10701 College Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46280 .

The December board meeting and holiday celebration will take place December 7th at 11am at Matteo's Ristorante Italiano at 40 N. 9th St. Noblesville, IN 46060.

These meetings are open to the public. Please RSVP if possible for the December meeting so we can assure adequate seating at 317-773-2181 or soil.water@hamiltoncounty.in.gov.

Visit our website!
www.hamiltonswcd.org

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Save the Date— 2017 Annual Meeting and Workshop February 16th, 2017



You are invited to the 2017 Hamilton County SWCD Annual Meeting. Workshop sessions are being finalized and details will be available on our website soon. An election for a SWCD board member will be held as well as a review of SWCD activities and a delicious hot lunch served.

Businesses and organizations interested in reserving a vendor table are encouraged to contact the SWCD at soil.water@hamiltoncounty.in.gov or 317-773-2181.



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