

# Town & Country

Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District

Spring 2015

## Upcoming Free Workshop to Cover Pond Edge Enhancements

Hamilton County has over 1000 detention ponds and many are currently showing signs of age and deterioration or soon will. Issues like erosion, poor water quality, and pesky Canadian Geese are all common problems. Pond edge enhancements are plantings of native flowers, grasses, and emergent plantings that stabilize the shoreline preventing or stopping erosion, absorb excess nutrients before they get into the water, and deter geese from coming ashore.

Join us to learn about :

- The environmental and cost saving benefits of edge enhancements
- Challenges and management
- Installation demonstration
- View Ridgefield's successful planting and hear about their project challenges and success
- Financial assistance info and more!

**Saturday June 13th**

**9am**

**Ridgefield Subdivision– Fishers**

(from HW 37 go East on 131st. Street and turn right on Promise Road. Make immediate right onto Alamosa Drive.)



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Questions or register:

Hamilton County SWCD · [www.hamiltonswcd.org](http://www.hamiltonswcd.org)  
claire.lane@hamiltoncounty.in.gov · 317-773-2181 or  
Dan McCord [dan.mccord@comcast.net](mailto:dan.mccord@comcast.net) · 317-997-2296



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**Town & Country**

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**2015 Photography Contest Accepting Submissions**

We are currently accepting submissions for the 2nd annual SWCD photo contest. Prizes for winners of each category and age group (adult and youth) will be awarded. This year we will have two categories— Farm Scenes and Conservation Practices that Prevent Soil Erosion. Some examples of photos from the farm scene category may include farm landscapes, farm buildings, crops, farm operations (historical or modern), woodland, etc. Conservation practices that prevent soil erosion may include cover crops, reduced tillage, grassed waterways, vegetative cover (riparian areas, pond edges, etc.), erosion control structures, tree plantings, and more!

More examples and full details of the photo contest can be found in the office or at [www.hamiltonswcd.org/photo-contest.html](http://www.hamiltonswcd.org/photo-contest.html).

Entries are due by July 1st, 2015. Photos will be displayed at the SWCD booth at the Hamilton County 4-H fair.

**Annual Meeting Recap:**

The 2015 Annual Meeting was held February 26th at the Hamilton County 4-H Fairgrounds Exhibition Hall. Four education sessions (including offerings of PARP and CCA & CCH credits), vendor tables, presentation of awards, and a meal were all parts of the successful gathering. Rodney Rulon was re-elected to the SWCD board and will continue to serve as the board chair. Thanks again to the 120+ people who joined us!

**Upcoming Events:**

- May 19th**– Beginning Gardening Workshop- Carmel Community Garden behind Carmel Middle School—5:30PM
- May 21st**– Spring Green Garden Club– Rain Garden Workshop  
John Hensel Government Center– Carmel– 7PM
- May 23rd**– Carmel Earth Fair—Carmel Community Garden behind Carmel Middle School—12-4 PM
- May 25th**– Memorial Day– Office Closed
- June 13th**– Pond Edge Enhancement Workshop (see pg. 1 for details)
- June 16th**– How to Make a Rain Garden– Hamilton East Public Library (Noblesville) - 6:30-7:30PM
- July 3rd**– 4th of July Holiday- Office Close
- July 16th-21st**– Hamilton County 4-H Fair
- August 1st**– Painted Rain Barrel Display at Carmel Farmers Market
- August 8th**– Painted Rain Barrel Auction– Carmel Arts and Design District Gallery Walk
- August 19th**– Fall Cost Share Deadline

## Water Testing Offered For Stormwater Retention Ponds

Urban stormwater ponds are a major landscape feature in the urban environment. They look blue, fresh and inviting. They impound stormwater from our streets, parking lots, buildings and lawn. The water flowing off these surfaces can pick up pollutants and carry them into the ponds. The type and quantity of pollutants will vary with the watershed (drainage area). Little is known about the water quality of Hamilton County retention ponds.

This summer, Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District, with funding from the County Council, will inspect and complete water testing on a selected number of ponds. Our first step is to create a list of potential pond sites offered by willing owners. We will then select a number of ponds that fit our selection parameters. We will complete a water test of the pond and review the pond management. The management review will include soil erosion, pipe conditions, earth stability, outlet condition, rodent damage, aquatic weed pressures and water quality practices. A report will be completed and provided to the owner at no charge.

At the end of the summer we will have a better understanding of the current condition of our ponds and the quality of the water in them. We hope the study will enable us to recommend with some certainty pond and watershed management techniques that improve a pond's water quality. If you, or your HOA, would like to participate in the water quality testing program, please contact the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District at 317-773-2181 or email: [soil.water@hamiltoncounty.in.gov](mailto:soil.water@hamiltoncounty.in.gov).



## Pond Management Class

A pond management class will be offered this summer. The class will meet twice to discuss watershed management, pond ecology, aquatic plant identification and control, aeration, dredging, wildlife management, fish stocking and correcting bank erosion. The class will be held on two separate nights to cover the numerous topics. Contact the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District to be put on a list of interested participants. When the details have been worked out, you will be contacted to register for the Pond Pro class.



## Residents Take Action to Prevent Ravine Erosion and Sediment Loading into Lake

*Leslie White Fall Creek Watershed Partnership*

Ravines are a hot topic for lake area property owners. Many neighborhoods have open storm drains that runoff to the lake. This runoff can cause severe erosion and can fill coves and shoreline areas with sediment, making periodic dredging necessary. Natural ravines are extremely sensitive to storm runoff, which leads to slope erosion and down-cutting of the ravine bed — requiring active management to arrest destructive water runoff and protect the ravine's unique hydrologic and habitat qualities.

Cooperation among homeowners is key to spotting and correcting this issue and making ravine stabilization possible. Case in point — Masthead residents at the west shore of Geist, in partnership with the Geist Lake Coalition, have submitted a Lake and River Enhancement grant application to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to stabilize a ravine. It is estimated that, based on an average of 1/2 inch of erosion per year, this project could save 6 tons of soil loss annually.



Rock Grade Stabilization Structures

The project's goal is to address the long-term erosion of the ravine, which negatively impacts both land and water around the reservoir. The project involves utilizing naturally available materials in the ravine to create 15 grade stabilization structures along its 500 foot run to the reservoir. The ravine touches eight different home owners' properties.

This solution will greatly slow storm runoff velocity, reducing erosion and arresting the volume of sediment spilling into the reservoir. Also included in the project is the removal of invasive plants and installation of native plantings with deep root systems that will help hold the soil structure of the currently failing ravine banks.

To lessen the impact on yards, the plan is to bring heavy equipment through a single access point and work up from the tributary's mouth, clear clogged run-off material from the ravine floor, and utilize it for water control and securing the ravine banks. This will minimize the disruptive footprint.

On-going maintenance will be via a new concept of creating two gutter systems between properties and only using pump hoses with no heavy equipment. There should be little mess. Neighbors along the ravine will monitor the grade stabilization structures.

"Erosion has been occurring along these ravines since the first development in the 1980's," said project organizer and resident Hank Dragoo. "Over time it has worsened, as more roadways, homes, driveways and other impervious surfaces have been constructed. Storm water runs off these hard surfaces and is funneled through open storm drains, like a fire hose, jetting into ravines around the lake, blasting the shores and carrying pollutants that impair everyone's water quality."

Dragoo and neighbors reached out to the Fall Creek Watershed Partnership's Leslie White and John South and the Geist Lake Coalition for technical assistance on conservation-oriented best management practices to address the drainage and erosion issues. Dragoo added, "We have been working closely with Fall Creek Partnership and the Coalition to design a workable solution and to source cost-sharing programs to help offset the expense of correcting this problem and stabilizing the ravine. We are fully committed to implementing these measures and developing a maintenance program to solve dredging needs once and for all. This will greatly benefit the woodland and aquatic wildlife, as well as the homeowners."

This project will offer a template for similar projects along all shores of Geist, proving success through homeowner orchestration and unified effort. Long-term environmental benefits include lessened sediment run-off into lake, reduced aquatic plant growth, and an enhanced natural setting, all of which boost property values. Contact Leslie at 765-274-6499 or [leslie-white@iaswcd.org](mailto:leslie-white@iaswcd.org)

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## Backyard Conservation Spotlight

Claire Lane, Backyard Conservation Coordinator



### Cost Share

This spring there was great interest in the Backyard Conservation Program. Dozens of site visits resulted in 14 applications for the spring cost share period. The SWCD was able to provide financial assistance for 1 bioswale, 2 rain gardens, 6 tree and shrub plantings, 9 pollinator gardens, 3 invasive species removal projects, 2 pond edge filter strip projects, and 1 prairie establishment. The fall cost share deadline will be August 19th.

### Carmel Painted Rain Barrel Event

On August 1st a selection of painted rain barrels will be featured at the Carmel Farmers Market. These barrels will then be available for purchase through a silent auction on August 8th at the Carmel Arts and Design District Gallery Walk. Please mark these dates on your calendar and keep your eyes open for more details. This will be a great opportunity to take home a beautiful, unique, and functional piece of art!

### Rain Barrels and diverters now for sale at the SWCD

50-55 gallon rain barrels are now for sale at the SWCD. These repurposed food grade barrels are available for \$70 plus tax. This year, we also have diverters (install into your downspout and help fill the barrel with water) for sale for \$25 plus tax and small metal yard signs that identify your rain barrel as a conservation practice (native plants, rain garden, and native tree signs also available).

## Local artists paint barrels for SWCD display

Last winter, three local artists volunteered their time to paint rain barrels for several display projects. These three barrels turned out beautifully and have generated great interest in rain barrels and conservation. One of the barrels will reside in a permanent exhibit on conservation at Cool Creek Nature Center, one will be displayed at our office, events, and various locations as an educational feature, and the third will be available in a silent auction sometime in the future to raise money for conservation education. We are so thankful for the artists' time and their willingness to share their great talent with all of us.



Kandi Jamieson of the Arthouse - Noblesville



Dawn Richardson of Fishers



Kathy Garnes of Carmel

## So You Want to Have Your Soil Tested?

Spring is finally here and many people are already beginning to plant their gardens or will be in the near future. As a result, our soil testing service has also picked up quite a bit. If you were not already aware of it, we do offer a soil testing program through the Soil and Water Conservation District, which many homeowners use each year to test their garden and lawn soils for deficiencies and surpluses. It is a pretty simple procedure and only requires about 2 cups of soil, which the homeowner takes on their own and brings in to our office, in most cases.

### Why Have Your Soil Tested?

- Encourages plant growth by providing the best lime, fertilizer or other soil amendment recommendations. *When growers guess about the need for lime or fertilizers, too little or too much is likely to be applied. By using a soil test report, the grower does not need to guess.*
- Diagnoses whether there is too little or too much of a nutrient.
- Promotes environmental quality.
- Saves money that might otherwise be spent on unneeded lime and fertilizer.



*Some home owners routinely apply phosphorus to their lawns. In areas where soil levels are high in phosphorus, a soil test could save these home owners money.*

### How to take a soil sample:

Since only a small portion of the soil is used for testing, it is very important that the sample be representative of an area. For a standard soil test, take several samples from each area of your yard (front yard, shrub bed, garden, etc.). For large areas, 5-8 cores are needed, but for narrow shrub or flower borders, 2-4 cores will do the job. Mix all of the samples together in a clean pail or bucket to get your representative sample or "average" soil for your yard.

If you are targeting a problem area, you can restrict your sampling to the problem area only.

### Sample Tips:

*Remove surface debris, such as plant residues, mulch or turf thatch, from the soil before inserting the soil probe, spade, or trowel.*

*Sample gardens and shrub and flower beds to a depth of 6-8 inches.*

*Sample turf areas to a 3-inch depth.*

*Sample tree root zones to 8-12 inches or deeper.*

*Sample row crops (in gardens) between the rows to avoid fertilizer bands.*

*Sample front and back yard separately if they have been managed differently or contain different types of fill soil.*

*Dry samples at room temperature. (Do not use artificial heat.)*

*Break up any lumps and remove all stones, debris, grass, etc.*

*When dry, mix well and eliminate clumps.*

*Bring ~2 cups of soil to the SWCD in a clean container for testing.*

*(Instructions adapted from Purdue Extension "Collecting Soil Samples for Testing" HO-71-W)*

**Visit our website for more instruction on taking soil samples: [www.hamiltonswcd.org/Soil\\_Testing.html](http://www.hamiltonswcd.org/Soil_Testing.html)**

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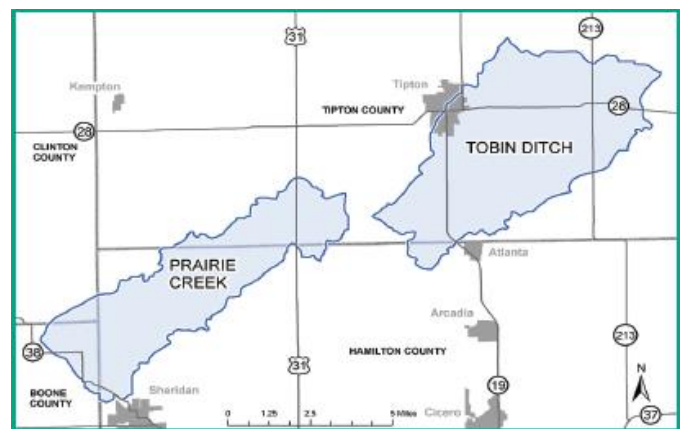
### Mississippi River Basin Initiative Looks to Reduce Nutrients in Prairie Creek and Tobin Ditch Watersheds

NRCS is investing \$10 million this year in 27 new high-priority watersheds and 13 existing projects that will help improve water quality and strengthen agricultural operations. This investment through the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) is part of a commitment of \$100 million over four years to address critical water quality concerns in priority watersheds while boosting rural economies. The headwaters of Cicero Creek, Tobin Ditch and Prairie Creek were chosen and \$60,000 has been set aside for 2015 funding. MRBI funding comes from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), to help farmers adopt conservation systems to improve water quality and habitat. Funding will also be available in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

If you are interesting in learning more please contact Angie Garrison at 765-482-6355 ext 3 or visit: [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/in/programs/landscape/?cid=nrcs144p2\\_031031](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/in/programs/landscape/?cid=nrcs144p2_031031).

The application deadline for this year is June 16<sup>th</sup>.

Core Conservation Practices: Cover Crops, Residue Mgmt., Nutrient Mgmt., Two-Stage Ditches, Conservation Cover, and Filter Strips



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