

Town & Country

Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District

Spring 2019



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Town & Country

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Welcome Our Newest Associate Board Member

I am excited to join Hamilton County SWCD as an associate board member, marking three generations of my family’s involvement in the 50-year history of our district. As a 10-year Hamilton County 4-H member, I spent time slurping Farm Bureau milkshakes, checking out the old diorama, and wondering what “T by 2000” really meant while dad was manning the Soil and Water Conservation District’s (SWCD) booth at the county fair.

I went on to earn a BS in Biology (Purdue University, 2002) and spent the next 16 years as a hydrologist and technical specialist with the US Geological Survey. My research teams studied low-level mercury, nutrients, pesticides, and emerging contaminants in both surface water and groundwater in Indiana and California. In 2017, I was able to switch gears and return to my Hamilton County roots to join my dad and brother (Dick and Josh Egler) in the operation and management of our 4th generation family farm. We raise corn and soybeans in the northern half of our county and employ conservation practices including 100% no-till, grassed waterways, and riparian buffers.

Coming back to the farm has been quite an adventure and learning experience. I consider myself lucky that in addition to the wealth of institutional knowledge provided by Dad and Josh, I have landed in a circle of trusted agricultural professionals. They have taken the time to help me come up to speed on everything from seed selection and pest and disease management, to grain marketing and equipment selection. I’m constantly peppering folks with questions and I’m learning so much along the way.

With rising input costs, uncertain markets, and increasing pressure from commercial and suburban development, it’s a challenging time to be a farmer in Hamilton County. Conservation practices that save money and increase yields will continue to be factors in our ability to be successful and continue farming for generations to come.



Egler on the tractor with her future generations of family farmers



INTERN SPOTLIGHT



Hello all! If you don’t already know me, my name is Grace Cochran and I am a senior at Noblesville High School. I have been the Intern at Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District since August 2018.

This internship has given me exposure to new concepts and ideas that I had not known before. Specifically, I have learned about the connections between the soil and water within our community and the importance of it all. I love going out in the field and giving back to the community in some way. One of my favorite things that I have participated in was the planting of a rain garden between the bridge in Fishers and Carmel. I think making a difference in other people’s lives is one of the most important things, and if you can help the environment while doing it, it doesn’t get much better than that!



A New Sense for Nuisance Wildlife

Emily Wood Executive Director, Indiana Wildlife Federation



INDIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

It's springtime in Indiana, which means human-wildlife interactions will be on the upswing. It is also the time of year that we hear the term "nuisance wildlife" the most.

At the Indiana Wildlife Federation, we call "nuisance wildlife" by another name: wildlife.

While it may be very true that a raccoon in your attic, a possum in your trash, or a coyote exchanging sideways glances with your pug is a problem; most negative wildlife interactions are completely preventable. Prevention is key and by taking these small steps you can keep your property and pets safe.

In our wildlife workshops, we discuss the 4 needs of wildlife as being food, water, shelter, and nesting space. If you have a wild animal attempting to claim squatter's rights to your crawl space, the animal is likely trying to meet at least one of those needs. To keep wildlife out of your house, chicken coop or garage, *exclusion* is the name of the game.

For example, let's look at the old nursery tale of *Goldilocks and the 3 Bears*. A family of three unsuspecting bears briefly stepped out of their house leaving their doors and windows unsecured. By leaving out freshly cooked food, comfortable seating options and mattresses of varying firmness, it was only a matter of time before they lured a nuisance human into their home. (Alice in Wonderland could have also been avoided if the rabbit had time to close his front door.)



Now realistically, most wildlife isn't casually walking through your front door; but loose siding, a small crack under the garage door or a gap in the gable or eaves of a roof can look just as inviting to wildlife looking to keep warm or grab a snack. Routine inspections of your property to identify and secure places that might be open to an uninvited guest are recommended.

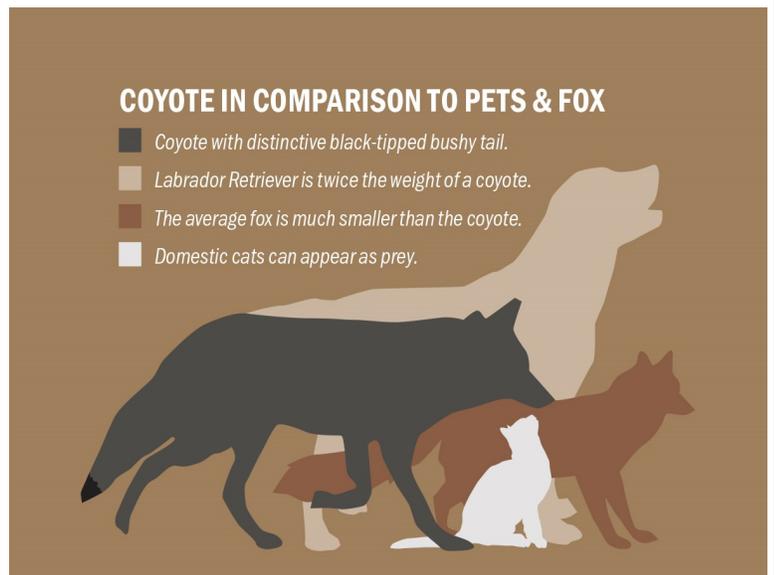
Securing potential food sources like loose garbage bags, outdoor pet food, and even bird feeders is also a good idea when trying to discourage a close encounter of the furred kind. It should be noted that coyotes and fox are not known to be found dining on the seed at bird feeders, rather the guests. In fact, bringing supplemental feeders inside before spring is a good idea to also cut down on breeding songbird predation from natural predators as well as domestic cats.

Speaking of free range pets—the very best way to keep your pets safe from negative wildlife interactions is to keep them under your supervision. By reducing the opportunities for your cat or dog to wander into a fox or coyote territory, you reduce the chance that your pet will be challenged. Remember that people and pets are likely as unaware of wildlife territories just as much as wildlife are unaware of our property lines and personal space boundaries.

Highly adaptable species like fox and coyote can easily be found in both rural and urban settings. It is our responsibility to understand how to safely interact with nature when the boundaries between human habitat and wildlife habitat are impossible to define. That's what organizations like the Indiana Wildlife Federation as well as Soil and Water Conservation Districts are here to help with! You can learn more about wildlife and habitats by visiting our website indianawildlife.org or hosting a workshop!

Want to write a guest column to represent your business or organization?
Contact:
jenny.blake@hamiltoncounty.in.gov

projectcoyote.org





“I Want to Build a Pond”

Mark McCauley, Resource Conservationist

This is often a comment I get from land owners in Hamilton County, especially as their thoughts turn towards Spring. Sometimes they are trying to alleviate some flooding issues (which it is not often effective for that), other times they want a fishing pond, and sometimes they just want the aesthetics of a pond on their property. In any of these cases, this

is where the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) can offer some guidance and assistance. We will meet with you on site, discuss your plans and objectives, and steer you in the right direction. The end result could mean a pond is in your future...or not.

There are several factors that need to be taken into account when considering a pond. For instance, if the soils are not favorable for a pond, you would want to know that up-front so you don't waste time and money on a hole that will not hold water. Other things, like the size of the watershed, needed permits, dam construction, aeration, fish stocking, emergency overflow outlet, etc. are all factors that need to be considered. A typical process might look like this. You decide you would like to install a pond at a certain location on your property. You contact your local planning department to see what the steps and requirements might be. You then contact the SWCD office for an initial site visit. We will meet with you at the site and then follow up with a written report containing recommendations and guidelines to walk you through the process. In some cases, that report may state that the site does not appear to be suitable and we will caution you about moving forward. In other cases, it may be a favorable site and we will provide you with that information as well. There are literally hundreds of ponds in the county, many of which are on private property. Some are good sites with functioning ponds, while others are not. If this is something you have been considering, please contact our SWCD office for assistance and we will be happy to meet with you.



Community Heroes Needed for Emergency Preparedness

Ginger Davis, District Administrator

It was a mild morning in late April. The National Weather Service indicated that a thunderstorm, producing heavy rain and damaging winds, was headed towards the area. By mid-morning, runoff from the heavy rain began to flood low-lying areas and the wind had downed many powerlines. By late afternoon, the normally quiet creeks had crested their banks and caused more flooding. Multiple reports were coming in which included people being trapped in their homes, multiple flooded streets, and evacuations of homes located on the steep eroding slope of the river's edge. Meanwhile, one of our farmers, who is also located along the river, was trying to get their livestock in the barn after the heavy winds and flooding wiped out the fence. With the help from friends and neighbors, the farmer was able to round up the herd... or what was left of the herd. It was quickly realized that many had been lost. They must have been swept away by the storm and taken down the river. Efforts to locate the rest of the animals ended fruitless. After the flooding receded, the realization of the destruction to the property quickly set in. Because of the massive erosion that was caused by the storm, there was not enough feeding potential on the land to support the whole herd.

Emergency situations can arise at any moment. Often, we rely on our community and neighbors to help support us in our time of need. If you are interested in helping to support our community in a time of need, you can sign up on our website to get on our community hero list. Community Heroes provide us with support when it is needed the most. Whether you can provide hay to help our livestock owners, have a barn that could be used as a temporary shelter, have heavy equipment that could be used for clean-up assistance, can deliver goods to people in need, or want to volunteer to help during a disaster, we are interested in getting you on our Community Hero contact list. We are working with our local Emergency Management Department to proactive preparedness. Creating a Community Hero list for those that could help locally with our resources will be a huge asset to have on hand when a disaster strikes.



We could all use a little help sometimes

Sign up to be a Community Hero in the event of an Emergency at www.hamiltonswcd.org/hero or call us at 317-773-2181



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Urban Conservation Spotlight

Claire Lane, Urban Conservationist



Spring Sustainability Workshop to be held on April 13th - Organic Gardening

Are you interested in creating or transitioning to organic practices in your garden? Join fellow gardeners on Saturday, April 13th to learn how to use organic practices throughout your garden and develop a plan for your property.

Organic gardening is more than simply avoiding synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. In this workshop you will learn about soil health, cover crops, pest management, and sourcing organic products with an eye toward permaculture and creating a holistic ecosystem.

This workshop is part of an annual spring Sustainability Series held by Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District and Purdue Extension Hamilton County. This year's event is also sponsored by Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Each year we focus on a different sustainable living topic for our annual workshop series. A holistic organic gardening approach is central to sustainability. This workshop is great because it is not just about receiving great information, but also developing a plan to implement it on your property. We focus on providing access to expert speakers, so attendees can ask specific questions regarding their property and get advice.



The Sustainability Workshop will take place Saturday April 13th at the Hamilton County 4-H Fairgrounds Exhibition Hall in Noblesville. The workshop costs \$20 per person (includes lunch) and will run from 9am – 3pm. Registration can be completed at www.hamiltonswcd.org. Space is limited.

Avoid Invasives! Grow Indiana Natives this Spring!

Sunshine and warmer temperatures are nearly here. As you consider your planting choices for your landscape this spring we encourage you to Grow Indiana Natives. Did you know, several invasive species are commonly sold at landscape stores and contribute to the spread of harmful, non-native plants. Despite being well known to ecologists as invasives, callery/bradford pear, burning bush, English ivy, periwinkle, Norway maple, sweet autumn clematis, and wisteria are commonly available via retail outlets. Customers assume that stores would not sell invasive species but due to a lack of awareness and/or the fact that the plants sell, retailers sell the very plants land managers spend thousands of dollars trying to eradicate each year. A great resource to check if a plant is invasive is the EDDMapS website (www.eddmaps.org/indiana/Species). You can also use the site to report sightings of invasive species in natural areas.



Luckily, there are many great locations that sell native plants and are conscientious about not selling invasive species. Retailers listed on the Grow Indiana Native website (growindiananatives.org) are great places to do your plant shopping!

The best way to eliminate invasives from retail sales is through our own purchasing power. Ask for more native plants at retailers and if you see them selling an invasive species, let them know. Encourage them to join Grow Indiana Natives. In Hamilton County, the Soil and Water Conservation District's plant kit sale, Native Plants Unlimited, the Master Gardener's plant sale, and Cool Creek Nature Center are all Grow Indiana Natives registered.

There are a couple other developments related to invasive species this spring. Through the diligent work of the Indiana Invasives Council and other groups, the DNR Natural Resources Commission has adopted a rule that would prohibit and restrict the introduction, sale, distribution, and transport of 44 highly invasive plant species in Indiana. The rule still needs approval from the Governor but we hope it will be approved and in place by next spring. You can learn more about the rule and the 44 species on our website hamiltonswcd.org/invasivespecies.

Finally, if you are interested in being part of the fight against invasive species in Hamilton County, I invite you to be part of our Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area or CISMA. This is a new effort centered around identifying local invasive concerns and developing local solutions. You do not need to be an expert to contribute to this effort. Learn more on the CISMA page on our website or contact claire.lane@hamiltoncounty.in.gov.

"Mine's not invasive! I make sure it doesn't spread and it hasn't moved in my yard!"

We hear this a lot. Unless you control birds and the wind, you can't be sure your plant isn't spreading offsite. While it is hard to remove a plant you've grown to love, invasive species pose a great threat to our environment and economy.

There are many native alternatives with similar characteristics you can replant in its spot!



Urban Agriculture Conservation Spotlight

Andrew Fritz, Urban Agriculture Conservationist

Common Invasives and Native Alternatives

INVASIVE PLANTS	NATIVE ALTERNATIVES
 <p data-bbox="191 667 360 693">Bush Honeysuckle</p>	 <p data-bbox="548 667 704 693">Native Spicebush</p>
 <p data-bbox="207 1073 344 1098">Chinese Privet</p>	 <p data-bbox="532 1073 721 1098">Blackhaw Viburnum</p>
 <p data-bbox="224 1478 328 1503">Callery Pear</p>	 <p data-bbox="565 1478 688 1503">Serviceberry</p>
 <p data-bbox="214 1883 337 1908">Burning Bush</p>	 <p data-bbox="548 1883 704 1908">Strawberry Bush</p>

Amazing Natives for your Backyard and Garden

Many native sales (including our own) are either currently happening or will happen soon. Now is the perfect time to plant natives for your backyard and garden. Natives attract beneficial insects that are predators to many pests. Many of these plants are available as plugs or in pots. If not, many can be purchased as seed, too. Below are just a few that could work for you!

Narrowleaf Mountainmint

Narrowleaf Mountainmint is typically found in upland prairies; dry, rocky, open woods; low, wet areas as well as fast-draining Post-Oak woods and pine barrens. They can adapt to various soils moist or dry. Bees and butterflies love this plant. Numerous animals eat the seeds and it will attract the occasional deer. Dried leaves can be used as flavoring and in teas. Rubbing the leaves on your skin has been known to repel mosquitoes.



New Jersey Tea

New Jersey Tea is typically found within open deciduous woods, woodland edges, oak savannas, mesic or dry prairies, or along roadsides. It is very adaptable to many soils; wet, dry, limey, sand, loam, and more. It is a host to several butterfly and moth larvae. It is a great nectar source and has special value to native bees. Turkeys and quail consume the seeds.



Foxglove Beardstongue



Foxglove Beardstongue is a great bloomer for clay loam in areas with poor drainage. Given Hamilton County's propensity for clay soils that drain poorly, this should be in every yard. It attracts hummingbirds, is a great nectar source, hosts several species of moth and butterfly, and is a special value to many beneficial insects.

More questions about what specific native species to plant?

Contact Andrew.fritz@hamiltoncounty.in.gov

OUR NEWSLETTER IS GOING ELECTRONIC!!

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