

HAMILTON COUNTY
Soil & Water



CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Strategic Plan

2018-2022



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Introduction

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is the only public agency required by state law to review soil and water stewardship and provide local leadership to enhance our natural resources. Soil and water quality are key focus areas because of their impact on economic development and quality of life for local citizens. The purpose of this strategic plan is to provide a process that produces tools to aid decision makers in identifying, prioritizing, pursuing, and protecting those natural resources that will most effectively and efficiently achieve the SWCD's mission.

HISTORY

In 1967 many landowners throughout Hamilton County led a petition drive to establish the Soil and Water Conservation District under IC 14-32. The referendum was successful and the Hamilton County SWCD was formally approved in 1968. Hamilton County SWCD officially became an entity on May 15th, 1968 and held its first board meeting to discuss the purpose and objectives of the new SWCD.

“It took the whole community of Hamilton County to form the soil and water conservation district and so that is who we serve”.

Reliable soils information and drainage improvements were two main issues and reasons for the public to rally around the formation of our department. Those issues are still with us today and are at the core of the SWCD. To compliment the “USDA Soil Survey of Hamilton County” published in 1978 the SWCD provides soil testing programs, soil health initiatives, and soil quality-based programs. The information gathered has helped all users of the land from the urban to the rural landscape.

Clean water and healthy soils are the most vital resources in the county. As our community lives, works, and plays we want to make sure they have access to clean water for consumption, recreation, and utilization. Nutrients, like nitrates and phosphates, can be key pollutants of surface waters in rural and urban Hamilton County, and our SWCD plays a critical role in helping to mitigate this at the local level. In addition, direct contamination of our groundwater could have a long-lasting impact on the economic development of the area. Our programs are designed to help protect these resources through education, addressing contaminants through filtration methods, and encouraging adoption through leadership and innovation.

We value all our partners that have helped the Soil and Water Conservation District build the conservation successes that Hamilton County has seen. Our Partners in Conservation come from multiple levels who are vital to our growth to improve our services and address the local natural resource needs. We thank our county, local, state, and federal partners for their continued support!

WHO WE ARE

A Soil and Water Conservation District constitutes a governmental subdivision of the State and a public body corporate and politic, exercising public powers (IC 14-32-5). The Soil and Water Conservation District is funded by state, county, and private contributions.

We are a government entity that promotes wise use of soil, water, and related natural resources in Hamilton County, Indiana through leadership, providing tools for conservation, growing a culture of conservation, promoting sustainable and holistic management, and building knowledge & awareness.

WHAT WE DO

1. Provide the public information about soils, water, and related natural resources conservation;
2. Identify and prioritize local soil and water resource concerns; and
3. Connect land users to sources of education, technical, and financial assistance to implement conservation practices and technologies.

One of our greatest strengths is our ability to coordinate assistance from all available sources—public, private, local, state, and federal—to develop locally-driven solutions to natural resources concerns.

OUR MISSION

Provide our community with conservation leadership and quality service dedicated to improving and sustaining our natural resources.

CORE VALUES

- Provide quality conservation services to residents
- Improve water quality in Hamilton County
- Improve soil quality in Hamilton County
- Improve management of natural areas
- Provide conservation education and awareness to both our youth and adult residents

VISION

A county where everyone participates in the act of conserving and enhancing our soil, water, and natural resources.

PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

We actively seek and maintain partnerships with organizations, groups, and individuals that can help us achieve our vision. Our partners come from government, nonprofit, public, commercial, and private organizations, and citizens. Our capacity is expanded with the cooperation and collaboration of great partnerships. Partnering with like-minded groups creates a larger impact on conservation.

These partnerships help us increase opportunities for cross-training and building our knowledge base. We value the ability to enhance our perspective and ability to see the bigger picture by gathering and listening to multiple points of views of our partners. We will identify opportunities to hold joint-sponsored events with other organizations, continue to actively participate in the Indiana Conservation Partnership, identify opportunities to partner to offer training, invite key leaders to attend SWCD activities or events (professors, agency leaders, etc.), and look for opportunities to partner with businesses that are bringing new technology and resources to the market which will enhance the wise use and protection of our natural resources.

Local Natural Resource Directives

In the spring of 2018, a survey of stakeholders was used to identify critical natural resource issues within the community. We asked board, staff, and stakeholders to identify all the critical issues affecting their community and resources. From the feedback, the list of Local Natural Resources Directives was created and ordered from highest level of feedback to lower levels for program development. We evaluated the risk to the resources if no additional conservation efforts through our office were given to the directive. Additionally, we indicated the impact given the tools and capacity at our disposal to the resources locally. Lastly, we identified whether direct or indirect efforts should be focused on in programs and projects. This analysis helps determine where to best focus economic and human resources and guides where efforts within goals should be directed as new opportunities and initiatives arise during the execution of the strategic plan through 2022.

Local Natural Resource Directives	Resource Risk	Impact	Direct/Indirect
<i>Drainage & Water Management</i>	Moderate Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Soil Erosion</i>	High Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Stormwater Management</i>	High Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct & Indirect
<i>Streambank Erosion</i>	Moderate Action Required	Moderate Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Soil Erosion Reduction through Buffer Strips</i>	High Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Soil Erosion Reduction through Cover Crops</i>	High Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Pollinators</i>	High Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Fertilizer & Agrochemical Utilization</i>	Moderate Action Required	High Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Wildlife Habitat</i>	High Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct & Indirect
<i>Conservation Tillage Systems</i>	Moderate Action Required	Moderate Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Urban Planting Choices</i>	Moderate Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Stream Pollution</i>	Moderate Action Required	Moderate Impact Likely	Direct & Indirect
<i>Preserving & Protecting Greenspace & Forests</i>	High Action Required	Low Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Soil Quality</i>	Urgent Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Low-impact Development</i>	Moderate Action Required	Low Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Construction Erosion & Temporary Stabilization</i>	Moderate Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Drinking Water Protection</i>	Moderate Action Required	Moderate Impact Likely	Direct & Indirect
<i>Commercial & Industrial Development</i>	Moderate Action Required	Low Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Construction Erosion & Permanent Stabilization</i>	High Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Recreational Use of Natural Areas</i>	Moderate Action Required	Low Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Subdivision Development</i>	High Action Required	Moderate Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Forest Management</i>	Low Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Prairie Development</i>	High Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Protecting Wildlife</i>	High Action Required	Moderate Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Septic Concentration</i>	Urgent Action Required	Low Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Sewage Handling Systems</i>	Low Action Required	Low Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Species Diversity</i>	Moderate Action Required	Low Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Livestock Management Systems</i>	Low Action Required	Low Impact Likely	Direct & Indirect
<i>Reservoir Capacity & Quality</i>	High Action Required	Moderate Impact Likely	Direct & Indirect
<i>Brownfields & Superfund Sites</i>	Moderate Action Required	Low Impact Likely	Direct & Indirect
<i>Productivity- Foods</i>	High Action Required	High Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Recreational Use of Water Bodies</i>	High Action Required	Moderate Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Wetlands</i>	Moderate Action Required	Moderate Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Migratory Birds</i>	Urgent Action Required	Low Impact Likely	Indirect
<i>Livestock Water Access & Protection</i>	Low Action Required	Moderate Impact Likely	Direct
<i>Recreational Development</i>	Low Action Required	Low Impact Likely	Indirect

Programs & Projects

In an effort to determine what is working and what we want to pursue in the future, staff and board members participated in an exercise to evaluate the current impact and effectiveness of all current programs and projects. The levels of impact and effort were determined based on extent of influence in the community, intensity, and hours spent on each program or project. These were then plotted on a graph scaled from low to high (zero to ten) for both impact and effort (See Chart 1). Programs or projects with low effort and high impact are desirable from a time management and human resource perspective. Any program or project that can be set up so that continued effort can be decreased, or impact increased with sustained effort levels will also be desirable. In initial analysis of these programs, a look at their past state was examined. Reflections and comparison of the current programs and projects considering the local natural resource directive perspective can reveal what initiatives should gain further focus and which programs and projects should be monitored for value.

General guidance for ongoing program and projects:

- **Monitor:** Low impact, low effort - Next step: Keep an eye on these; if a project starts to decline, assess whether it still has value or whether it has become busy-work.
- **Maintain:** High impact, low effort - Next step: As long as these deliver the desired impact, they make positive contributions to our overall success.
- **Focus:** Low impact, high effort - Next step: The return on investment may be insufficient; determine what is required to elevate the impact of these activities.
- **Promote:** High impact, high effort - Next step: Determine how to leverage these premier activities even more because the return on investment is complemented by the high impact scores.

Programs and projects will be reevaluated on an annual basis to examine their position within the chart and give further direction for the yearly plan of work.

Planning Steps

The planning methodology is divided into three sections – Compliance, Strategy, and Innovation. As an aspirational model, it respects the constraints facing our district while helping to use long-term and annual planning to get better results.



- Compliance stage, our SWCD is meeting the administrative and operational requirements for being a District in good standing.
- Strategy, our SWCD is focusing on programmatic needs of private and public stakeholders – education, technical assistance, marketing and communications, partnerships and collaborations, leadership development – while working within the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP).
- Innovation, our SWCD is moving into this third stage. We are seeking funders and collaborators beyond the ICP, pursuing cutting-edge technical assistance, actively cultivating leaders and staff, and engaging public stakeholders.

HAMILTON COUNTY SWCD PROGRAMS / PROJECTS

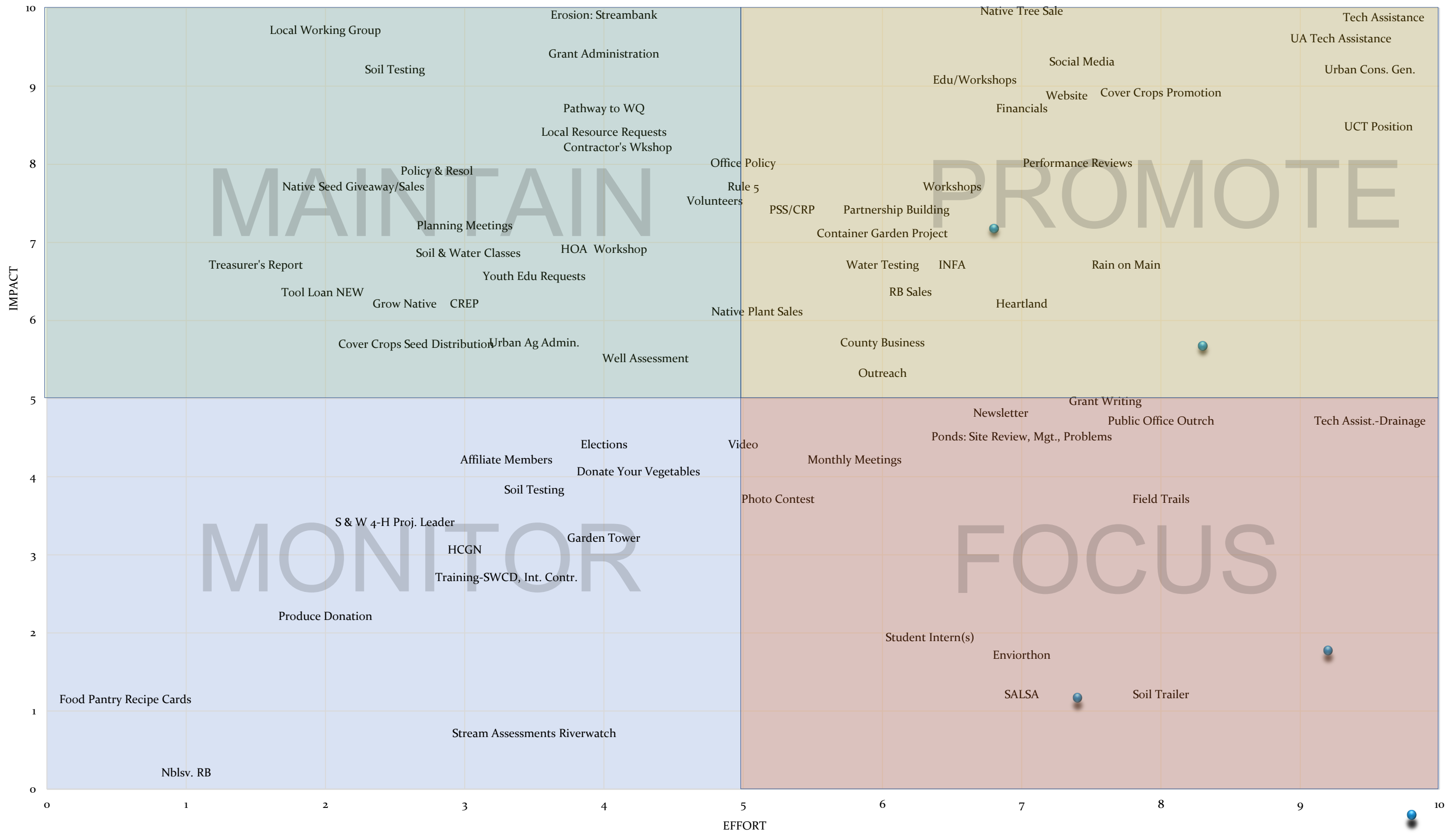


Chart 1: Program & Project Impact & Effort (Updated 6-1-2018)

Goals, Strategies, and Outcomes in Conservation

GOAL 1: TECHNICAL SERVICE PROVIDER

Provide customers and partners of the Soil and Water Conservation District with technical services related to conservation of natural resources.

Key Considerations:

- Technical services for private landowners, public agencies, and organizations providing conservation of natural resources that have maximum impact on Local Natural Resource Directives
- Technical assistance is not readily available for conservation efforts from other service providers
- Public stakeholders show need and ask for help to understand and implement conservation efforts
- Technical services provide greater adoption of conservation efforts and assist in decision making

Strategies:

- Complete individual site assessments and conservation plans with landowners, producers, developers, or other land users within the community to further the Local Natural Resource Directives
- Balance quality of life, social, environmental, and economic impacts when designing and implementing projects
- Minimize time on requests that do not further current mission, vision, or directives to free up resources
- Provide conservation resources in a timely matter
- Present resources in a standardized format that is easily understood with the appropriate tools
- Communicate clearly and follow-up as needed to generate quality services
- Personnel will be trained in techniques, tools, and new cutting-edge strategies for technical services
- Stay aware of and address gaps in services brought forward from partners and local leaders
- Create common lists of tools and resources to address common resource concerns
- Track assistance provided through a database for reporting and funding requests
- Solicit feedback and input from groups and individuals of services provided
- Keep abreast of local or specialized conservation service providers
- Actively seek underserved or detrimental resource concerns to broaden audience for services
- Work directly with partners currently addressing stormwater, soil erosion, and habitat improvements within our community to drive further holistic and sustainable management objectives
- Identify gaps in services, programs, and projects in Annual Plan of Work

Outcomes:

- Increase conservation practices in Hamilton County
- Improve awareness of conservation practices among landowners and managers
- Increase advertising of services by satisfied customers
- Increase direct attention to Local Natural Resource Directives, including but not limited to:
 - Drainage and water management, stormwater, and drinking water protection
 - Soil erosion, streambank erosion, soil quality
 - Urban planting choices, pollinators, prairie development, and forest management
 - Agricultural conservation through buffer strips, cover crops, fertilizer and agrochemical utilization, conservation tillage, livestock management & watering systems
- Improve technical and educational resources for customers

GOAL 2: DRAINAGE AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Protection and conservation of surface and groundwater resources is of vital importance to our community for health and prosperity. To this end, we will provide customers of the Soil and Water Conservation District and local stakeholders with programming and technical services geared towards water quality and water quantity improvements.

Key Considerations:

- Protection of water quality (surface water, stormwater, and groundwater) is a priority of our Local Natural Resource Directives
- There is a need locally to preserve and enhance the water and water environment for recreation, consumption, and aquatic species habitat
- A holistic approach to conservation with drainage and water management as a component is needed to address all resource needs
- Public stakeholders need help to understand and implement water management to address resource conservation and smart water use

Strategies:

- Promote sustainable water solutions
- Encourage protection and improvement of source water through conservation efforts & decision impacts
- Promote the development and adoption of sustainable strategies that link land and water uses
- Work towards reducing flood risk, improve water quality, protect and enhance water-related habitats, and address water management aspects of functional soil health systems
- Protection, restoration, and improvement of stewardship of aquatic, riparian, and watershed resources within the county
- Complete individual site assessments and conservation plans with landowners, producers, developers, or other land users within the community taking water related influences into account and discussing impacts of the resource concerns
- Identify and evaluate areas where high levels of contamination sources may be influencing surface or groundwater resources
- Reduce energy costs, improve water quality, and reduce excess water through the thoughtful selection and maintenance of conservation practices on municipal lands, neighborhoods governed by Home Owner Associations (HOAs), community spaces, and other land uses
- Locate and promote areas for upland storage of water to lessen impacts of floods
- Encourage the technique of top-soiling on development projects to improve water infiltration, reduce water consumption, and improve water quality
- Encourage, plan, and help oversee installation of conservation practices that can address water quality, water quantity, and clean groundwater recharge
- Increase well water knowledge and protection through programming and education
- Encourage the use of rain gardens and pond edge treatments to improve water quality
- Assist the MS4s with water quality education and demonstration projects
- Work with sister agencies on integration of water quality/water quantity components into systems
- Assess levels of current and future water demands during all hydrologic conditions (drought, flood, etc.)
- Actively seek new technologies, techniques, and/or systems to help address stormwater, tile drainage, or other closed water systems to address water quality concerns
- Seek traditional and alternative funding sources to address water quality/water quantity resource concerns

- Work with public and private partnerships to combine efforts towards water quality/quantity or habitat goals
- Identify gaps in services, programs, and projects for addressing water concerns of the community in Annual Plan of Work

Outcomes:

- Maximize water use efficiency
- Protection of current and future water needs
- Improve ecological function of water
- Improve water quality
- Increase effectiveness of water related conservation practices in Hamilton County
- Improve awareness of conservation practices to landowners
- Increase attention to Local Natural Resource Directives
- Strengthen conservation partnerships

GOAL 3: EROSION AND SOIL HEALTH

Provide customers of the Soil and Water Conservation District and local stakeholders with programming and technical services geared towards protection and conservation of soil resources.

Key Considerations:

- Reducing soil erosion and improving soil quality and soil health are a priority of our Local Natural Resource Directives
- Reducing erosion is uniquely tasked to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts by the state
- There is a local need to preserve and enhance the soil systems for food production, erosion reduction, and improved water management
- Public stakeholders need help to understand and implement conservation efforts to address soil erosion, soil quality improvements, and soil health enhancement

Strategies:

- Sediment and erosion control plan review of municipal projects
- Encourage the reduction of disturbance through smart planning and thoughtful land management
- Encourage biodiversity in soils to improve function and resiliency of area soils
- Reduce erosion by promoting thoughtful plant species selection
- Promote the rapid establishment and reduction of length of time the ground sits bare in development or production
- Use visual demonstrations to enhance the understanding of forces at work in soil erosion, soil drainage, and soil health
- Utilize and promote new technologies and techniques to improve soils within the county
- Assist the MS4s with soil erosion education and demonstration projects
- Encourage the technique of top-soiling on development projects to improve soil quality, soil health, and improve soil function over time
- Encourage, plan, and help oversee installation of conservation practices that can address soil quality, soil health, and soil erosion
- Identify connections between Soil Health and Local Natural Resource Directives in Annual Plan of Work

Outcomes:

- Reduction in soil erosion
- Attention to future soil needs
- Improve ecological function of soil
- Improve soil quality, soil health, and soil function
- Increase effectiveness of soil related conservation practices in Hamilton County
- Improve awareness of conservation practices to landowners
- Increase attention to Local Natural Resource Directives
- Strengthen conservation partnerships

GOAL 4: AGRICULTURE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMMING

Provide programming to support and encourage the adoption of conservation practices (including traditional practices) that will maintain or increase productivity over time while improving water and soil quality.

Key Considerations:

- Assistance for agricultural landowners and operators will be provided to encourage the wise use of natural resources and protect soil and water quality
- An Agriculture Stewardship Initiative will encourage a culture of conservation that will benefit both the producer, consumer, and natural resources
- Protection of resources through leadership, improved tools, and services that work with and towards Local Natural Resource Directives

Strategies:

- Establish program needs, criteria, and budget to support directives
- Hold workshops to improve understanding, knowledge, and attitude towards conservation practices
- Build leadership network for informational sharing
- Collect and share information from trials and sampling results for evidence-based motivation for adoption of soil and water quality improvements
- Monitor and track new technologies and information
- Network with agriculture landowners, farmers, and producer groups
- Identify the economic benefits of best management practice adoption
- Promote nutrient management, soil health, and water conservation practices
- Develop individualized holistic conservation plans
- Aid partners that mirror agricultural stewardship programming
- Develop cost-share programs or strategies for assistance and motivation for adoption of conservation practices and reduce financial and yield risks for farmers
- Encourage groundwater protection through well assessments, testing, and other resources

Outcomes:

- Increase conservation practices in Hamilton County
- Community oriented discussions and sharing of best practices
- Improve awareness of conservation practices among landowners
- Improve leadership in conservation by local landowners and producers
- Improve local level information and successful techniques for conservation
- Switch competitiveness from neighbor to market

- Protection of our soils, surface water, and groundwater resources
- Increased attention to Local Natural Resource Directives
- Improved technical and educational resources for customers

GOAL 5: URBAN CONSERVATION PROGRAMMING

Provide programming to support and encourage urban sustainability, a conservation ethic, and the adoption of conservation practices in the urban/residential areas of Hamilton County.

Key Considerations:

- Outreach and educational resources are the foundation of programming and assistance
- Assistance for urban/residential landowners will be provided to encourage the wise use of natural resources and protect soil and water quality
- Building educational resources will encourage a culture of conservation that will benefit both landowner and natural resources
- Protection of resources through leadership, improved tools, and services that work with and towards Local Natural Resource Directives

Strategies:

- Complete individual site visits with landowners, HOAs, future developments, parks, cities, urban green space owners, urban agricultural producers, and other land users within the community to further the Local Natural Resource Directives
- Enhance current programs (Rain on Main, Noblesville Rain Barrels, tree sale, plant sale)
- Develop new programs/partnerships as needed
- Expand urban ag partnerships and programming as staffing allows
- Expand and enhance Hamilton County Garden Network with quarterly meetings based on participant needs and interests
- Build awareness of invasives species and partners through CISMA- Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area
- Secure program and staff funding for projects through grants, sponsorships, partnerships, and product sales as needed
- Encourage restoration of turf areas to habitat, invasive removal, and native plants
- Encourage conservation/urban agriculture and low impact design in new development
- Provide cost share financial incentives to residents/HOA's/municipalities as funds allow
- Provide maintenance documents and/or work with municipalities to encourage green infrastructure adoption and compliance
- Encourage groundwater protection through well assessments, testing, and resources

Outcomes:

- Improve awareness of conservation practices to landowners
- Integration of conservation and sustainability into property management and life choices
- More habitat, more natives, fewer invasives, enhanced water quality
- Participants will embrace and share information and action with neighbors
- Increase number and quality of conservation practices installed in Hamilton County
- Increase local attention to Local Natural Resource Directives
- Partnerships with local groups, municipalities, faith groups, etc. strengthened
- Improve technical and educational resources for customers

GOAL 6: EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMING

Support knowledge and development of citizens through education regarding conservation of natural resources for current and future generations. Keep local conservation knowledge intact by encouraging youth retention as they transition to adults, provide continuing educations to adults, and encouraging generation to generation connection and discussion.

Key Considerations:

- General outreach and educational resources are the foundation of programing and assistance
- Building programming resources will encourage a culture of conservation and sustainability that will benefit both landowner and natural resources
- Protection of resources through leadership, knowledge sharing, and collaboration that work with and towards Local Natural Resource Directives

Strategies:

- Determine gaps in educational resources that will further the Local Natural Resource Directives
- Provide access to information and assistance that encourage the wise use of natural resources and protection of soil and water quality
- Create educational tip sheets/handouts
- Use social media outlets for conservation programs, projects, and perspectives
- Hold workshops and field days each year, topic varies based on assessed need
- Increase awareness of need for children to connect with nature (ICAN)
- Provide or coordinate invasive, non-native, and native species education
- Provide water quality or water quantity educational materials
- Develop and demonstrate soil quality, soil health, and soil erosion techniques
- Promote youth education of conservation, sustainability, and consciences practices
- Provide leadership and development of future conservation professionals
- Develop hard copy and online resources on topics as needed, update existing resources
- Develop conservation tours based on public and/or resource needs
- Provide maintenance documents and/or work with municipalities to educate on green infrastructure compliance
- Educate public where conservation practices are installed through outreach, signage, tours, and workdays
- Identify in Annual Plan of Work missing educational resources for conservation program and projects supported

Outcomes:

- Increased knowledge base for advancement of current knowledge
- Hands on opportunities to learn
- Increase interactive educational opportunities
- Conservation minded youth and adults
- Increase in awareness and installation of conservation practices in Hamilton County
- Increase attention to Local Natural Resource Directives
- Improve technical and educational resources for stakeholders

GOAL 7: PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Strengthen and expand collaborative relationships and partnerships

Key Considerations:

- Partnership development and relationship building will form strong and supportive allies in conservation efforts
- Coordinated efforts between agencies, groups, and organizations make limited resources go farther and span to multiple audiences on multiple levels
- Building on the knowledge and expertise from others provides better conservation systems to our county
- Building programming resources will encourage a culture of conservation and sustainability that will benefit both landowner and natural resources
- Protection of resources through leadership, improved tools, and services that work with and towards Local Natural Resource Directives

Strategies:

- Keep staff, management, and board members engaged with partners and community leaders to further the Local Natural Resource Directives
- Collaborate with partners to include water planning and conservation considerations in planning efforts
- Collaborate with partners to include soil health planning and conservation practices in planning efforts
- Improve working relationship with County Highway, County Planning, County Surveyor, Park and Recreation Departments, and other county departments as appropriate
- Work and engage with Purdue Extension for partnership opportunities
- Engage Hamilton County land users with FSA and NRCS conservation programs
- Strengthen our working relationships with the MS₄ storm water coordinators
- Work with local, regional, and state natural resource planning groups for improved services, resources, and programs for local landowners and stakeholders
- Strengthen relationships with local area businesses to develop positive-feedback loops with private sector
- Work with local leadership groups and organizations to promote conservation practices and conservation leadership within the community
- Work with neighboring SWCD to strengthen regional adoption of conservation practices
- Support and provide resources for volunteer and citizen lead natural resource groups
- Keep top down and bottom up communications flowing freely to exchange ideas and advance leadership in conservation
- Open exchange of ideas and thoughts to develop plans to achieve goals
- Identify conservation needs of partners in Plan of Work to assess our capabilities to fulfill partner needs that are mutually beneficial

Outcomes:

- New perspectives, ideas, skills, technical expertise, knowledge, capacity-building, resources, and contacts will be part of our network
- Increase exchange of information, learnings, and best practices
- Shared workload among partners
- Increase credibility and visibility of the SWCD
- Increase access and influence on decision-makers

- Broadening reach and message dissemination
- Broadening of support base
- Improve awareness of conservation practices among diverse groups
- Increase attention to Local Natural Resource Directives
- Strengthen conservation partnerships
- Improve resources for customers

GOAL 8: STAFFING AND FUNDING

Seek resources to provide appropriate conservation resource solutions to needs presented.

Key Considerations:

- General staffing and funding resources for the foundation of programing and assistance
- The SWCD is uniquely positioned to oversee the soil and water quality concerns of the county
- Financial support of conservation practices is often required to help sway individuals to adopt conservation beyond traditional means
- Building programming and project resources and capacity will encourage a culture of conservation and sustainability that will benefit both landowner and natural resources

Strategies:

- Seek appropriate funding sources to address needs of Local Natural Resource Directives that can have high impacts to the county
- Provide cost-share grants and resources as appropriate to enhance and improve conservation adoption
- Gain public and private sponsorship for programs and projects through thoughtful solicitation
- Present tracking and progress reports to funding entities to show needs and progress
- Develop donation and membership platforms to support programs and projects that address goals
- Work with partners on contribution agreements and other support mechanisms within the scope of the SWCD
- Plan and determine budget and staffing level needs for proposed and ongoing projects and programs
- Actively monitor financial resources ensuring accuracy and consistency in bookkeeping
- Seek alternative resources from partners to help with successful progress and completion of SWCD activities
- Identify in Annual Plan of Work funding needs and staffing levels needed for program and projects

Outcomes:

- Increase capacity for conservation practices in Hamilton County
- Improve awareness of district operations, programs, and projects for funders
- Increase attention of Local Natural Resource Directives
- Improve resources for customers

Timeline

The timeline for this strategic plan is 5 years starting in mid-2018 and running through 2022. Goals presented here are long-term goals that will outlive the life of this strategic plan. The outcomes and strategies presented will be focused on specifically in yearly Plan of Work to address the specifics of the efforts and their expected outcome and timeframe to address those outcomes.

Internal Analysis

The Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District has many strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to its continued success within Hamilton County. This analysis observes these SWOT and provides solutions within its capabilities to address each trait.

STRENGTHS

Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's strengths lie within its knowledgeable and hard-working staff. The value of knowledge and continued learning provide an opportunity for staff to continue to educate themselves and improve the natural resources within the county. With the identified Local Natural Resource Directives, thereby, staff can improve on knowledge of these topics and seek solutions to address their source in an efficient and effective manner. Our commitment to offer and provide technical services is a strong foundation for improvements in our Directives and can be a foundation for change within our community.

This District's strength also lies in the numerous partners that are willing and able to assist in our conservation efforts and help with providing numerous resources that can be utilized to address resource concerns that arise within the county. Our network within the community and willingness of volunteers, makes our impact on the community stronger and will form a great workforce to address the goals and objectives of our planning efforts.

WEAKNESSES

Our weaknesses can be translated into the weaknesses of the conservation perspective in today's social climate of our state. Most people hold the idea that conservation is a nice idea and can help to protect and improve the surrounding environment but are not willing to make a long-term commitment to enact conservation in everyday life. Our main weakness is the difficulty to get this message in each and every individual within the county. With a minimal staff in a very large population center, our need to create change is even more important. We hope to overcome this weakness by utilizing social media more, enacting a call to action, and utilizing our newest staff member to spread our message the community. This outreach combined with more press releases and coverage of our efforts, will help us overcome this weakness.

OPPORTUNITIES

With a movement toward sustainability, addressing food insecurity, foresight of the changes to come in water levels and flooding risks, help for threatened and endangered wildlife, and the benefits of a balanced ecosystem creeping into the mainstream society. We have an opportunity to capitalize on these trends and utilize our strengths to bolster and motivate these trends toward a better Hamilton County.

Our partners are looking into more programs to utilize ecotourism in Hamilton County. We have the opportunity to help engage and encourage more conservation efforts to enhance these experiences.

THREATS

With ever-changing budget and one's need to secure their own financial security, the financials of district operations could threaten our continued success and prosperity. As we have been threatened with staffing cuts in the past, if the county falls on financial hardship, our district is at a higher risk than other more security or safety-based departments of cuts. Current funding of valuable positions lies in grant funding. This lack of security and planning ability has crippled the success of programs. With the Part-Time status given to many employees, attracting well educated, long term individuals can be difficult at times. We plan to bolster programs and fundraising opportunities within the district to address and possibly solve many of these shortcomings.