

## **KICK-OFF SUGAR CREEK WATERSHED PLANNING & SWCD 53<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL MEETING**

Hancock County Soil and Water Conservation District's 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting and dinner will be held on March 20<sup>th</sup> at Ponderosa Steakhouse, 1550 N State Street, Greenfield, IN. Time is set for 6:00 pm; dinner will be served first then the Business Meeting will be following. This meeting will also be the Kick-Off of the Sugar Creek Watershed Management Plan.

In Indiana, a Soil and Water Conservation District is a subdivision of state government responsible for soil and water conservation programs within its boundaries. The purposes of the SWCD is to provide information about soil, water, and related natural resource conservation; identify and prioritize local soil and water resource concerns; and connect land users to sources of educational, technical, and financial assistance to implement conservation practices and technologies.

Our current Board of Supervisors are:

Tom Nigh, Chair

Burl Carmichael, Vice-Chair

Steve Lewis

Junior Burton

Ray Helms

and Associate Supervisors are:

Jim Cherry

Debi Hill

John Moran

Tom Roney

Todd Stephenson

The SWCD applied in 2005 for a 319 Grant through IDEM/EPA on the planning of a Watershed Management Plan for Sugar Creek; we were approved in January of this year. The grant runs through January 2007 through July 2009. Funds will be used to define the nature and extent of water quality problems from point & non-point source pollution in the area. This project will bring together stakeholders to establish watershed awareness and an action plan for Sugar Creek. Additional outreach will include creation of a watershed WebPages, news articles, Public Service Announcements (PSA's), handouts, field days, meetings, and educational school programs.

Sugar Creek Watershed is an 11 digit subwatershed of the larger Driftwood watershed and is primarily located in Hancock County. It begins in southwestern part of Henry County and southern part of Madison County travels from the northeastern part of Hancock towards the southwestern part of the Hancock and finishes in western Shelby County. Sugar Creek Watershed encompasses 84,750 acres in Hancock, Henry, Madison and Shelby Counties. The Sugar Creek, Little Sugar Creek and its numerous tributaries are utilized as an agricultural and municipal storm drainage outlet, and for recreational purposes (fishing, canoeing, and wildlife observation). Sugar Creek is listed on the 2004 Indiana 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies for e.coli, an indicator organism of the possible presence of pathogenic, human disease causing organisms.

The local description of the land use is agricultural (96 %) and urban (4%) in the Sugar Creek Watershed. The two upper most subwatersheds are mainly agricultural in nature with small rural towns with development increasing in the remaining watersheds to the south. "Topography is nearly flat and clayey soils

are poorly drained, which causes water to pond on the land surface unless agricultural tile drains are used. Tile drains “short circuit” the ground-water system by intercepting water percolation through the soil and shallow ground-water and transporting it rapidly to streams. Although tile drains help protect ground-water systems, they also transport pesticides and nutrients to streams during the months when the tile drains typically flow.” *Source USGS- Sugar Creek Watershed, Leary Weber Ditch Study.* Since agriculture is a large portion of this watershed, the watershed plan will assess and document if there are livestock having access to the streams, areas where filterstrips can be installed, where buffers can be implemented, etc.

Hancock County has a significant trend in population growth 21.7% increase during 1990-2000 and a 10% increase from 2000 to 2004, mainly on the western part of the County. As we have grown from a largely rural in the past to a more urban residential today; significant water quality issues have been at the forefront of our concern. Urban Sprawl brings with it imperious surfaces, increased run-off volumes, storm water problems, lack of proper water quality education for our growing residents, and misuse of fertilizers in the newly established subdivisions. Pollutants of concern include nutrients, sediment, bacteria, oils/grease and thermal pollution. In our rural communities we have failing and not well maintained septic systems. In 1999, Purdue University estimated that 65-70% of septic systems in Indiana fail. This increases the contamination for organic matter, nitrates, e.coli, and human pathogens in the surface water in our watersheds. Also, urban sprawl and lack of BMP buffers along our waterways may increase the risk of flooding. Development takes away acres of farms and open space each year adding additional threats to the water quality of Sugar Creek. We hope to create awareness about watersheds not only in Sugar Creek but also in the entire county and eventually implementing BMP’s at the targeted areas identified by the Watershed Plan.

Our Guest Speaker for the evening will be **Elizabeth Trybula, IASWCD Watershed Information Specialist.** Elizabeth recently transitioned to begin work as the Watershed Information Specialist with the Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Prior to this position, her experience in Watershed Management included contract work on the Clifty Creek Watershed Project (southeastern Indiana), where she served to develop and support a multi-county (11-digit) comprehensive watershed management plan, water quality monitoring network, local cost share program, and education/outreach programming. Additional professional experience includes GIS support for the Yellowwood Lake Watershed, grant development for local watershed organizations, as well as work with the Susquehanna River Basin Commission in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania where she focused on source water assessment and permit research, while supporting TMDL development and a contaminant warning system for utilities along the Susquehanna River.

The Business meeting agenda will consist of presentation of the Annual Report including the Annual Financial Report and also hold the election and appointment of SWCD Board Supervisors. Vying for the elected position will be Steve Lewis. Junior Burton will be sworn for the appointment position. To serve as an elected supervisor, a person must be of voting age, own or lease more than 10 acres of land in the district, maintain his or her permanent residence within the district, and be capable of performing the duties of the supervisor. To vote in a supervisor election, an individual must be of voting age and either own or rent property or land within the district or represent a firm, company or corporation that does. *(Eligible individuals also include the owner and tenant of the same land or property as well as any owner’s or tenant’s spouse.)*

**Tickets are only \$2.00 and you can reserve your spot by calling by March 16<sup>th</sup>** at the District office at 317-462-2283 Ext. 3. Come enjoy the food, the fun, friends and understanding of your watershed. If you have any questions, you can also stop by the office or email at [cindy.beckner@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:cindy.beckner@in.nacdnet.net) for more information.