

Hancock County Soil & Water Conservation District's 54th Annual Meeting

The Hancock County Soil and Water Conservation District's 54th Annual Meeting was held on March 4, 2008 at the Central Indiana Power Facility. Even with the **Ice Storm** – we had 55 attendees. **Go Green** was our theme for this year – handing out recycled “One Bag at a Time” Bags, <http://www.onebagatatime.com> and Compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) bulbs to everyone. Door prizes were \$10.00 off our tree sale and wildflower seeds.

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
Junior Burton
Steve Lewis
Ray Helms

and Associate Supervisors are:

Jim Cherry
John Moran
Alice Bogemann
Tom Roney
Todd Stephenson

Our Guest Speaker for the evening was **Mr. Greg Wagoner, Wabash Valley: Central Indiana Power** and spoke to us about Renewable Resources. Scott Brejcha and Ed Belmonte of V3 Companies gave an update presentation on our **Sugar Creek Watershed**.

The Business meeting agenda consisted of a presentation of the Annual Report including the Annual Financial Report, holding the election of a new SWCD Board Supervisor; with Burl Carmichael winning the election, the presentation of the County MS4 Stormwater Report. Tom Nigh, as the Appointed Supervisor, and Burl Carmichael were sworn in to office by Tara Wesseler Henry, ISDA at the SWCD Monthly Meeting on March 11th.

Conservation recognition and awards were given to the following recipients...

2007 River Friendly Farmer Award presented to **Kenny and Jeff Phares** by Cindy Newkirk, SWCD.

2007 Conservation Farm Award presented to **Tom Tucker of Double T Farms** and **Greg Kleiman of Kleiman Farms** by Jim Cherry, State Soil Conservation Board.

Natural Resource Stewardship Award presented to **Susan Bodkin** by Burl Carmichael, Supervisor.

And our Specialty Award was to be presented to Mary Jo Woodruff, former District Conservationist for 5 years of Excellence Service to the District by Tom Nigh, Supervisor, Chair – Mary Jo was unable to attend due to the weather. She was presented the award at the March 11th Board Meeting.

Other Accomplishments by the District are...

The 1985 Farm Bill, for the first time, tied farm program payments to Highly Erodible Land Conservation, and reauthorization occurred with each subsequent farm bill. As a result of the thousands of conservation plans developed by SCS/NRCS under these farm bills, the most widespread implementation of conservation tillage on Indiana's cropland was launched. In 1989, Indiana's “T by 2000” program launched the Indiana Tillage Transect to track changes in conservation tillage adoption across the state. This model was soon adopted by most states across the Corn Belt. Nothing has had a greater effect on no-till soybean production than “Round-Up Ready” Soybeans, which first became commercially available in 1996. The benefits to the

soil and water resources from this biotechnology development were of historic proportion. Over the span of just one decade, Indiana's no-till soybean acres increased from under 20% to over 60%. "BT Corn" was registered by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1997 and made the production of corn possible in many cropping systems without the use of expensive and sometimes dangerous broad spectrum insecticides. "BT Corn" has an introduced gene that produces a compound that is toxic to target pests, such as corn borer and rootworm. By 2000, even with advanced technology, no-till corn in Indiana was still only 21% of total production. **An increase of no-till corn to just 30% of production would reduce soil loss by 2,688,000 tons in Indiana.** In 2002, Indiana NRCS founded the Indiana Conservation Tillage Initiative to expand the adoption of no-till and other high residue farming systems. In 2004, the Tillage Transect showed that 19% of the corn acres and 61% of the soybean acres were planted using no-till technology. In 2006, 26 of Indiana's 92 counties participated in the annual Tillage Transect, supported by Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation. Of the 26 counties, 22 had increases in no-till corn and 24 had increases in no-till soybeans from their 2004 results. No-till corn increased by more than 25% in 14 of the 26 counties, and four counties had over a 100% increase.

In 2004 when the Hancock County Tillage Transect was completed - Hancock County ranked 89th in the State for Corn Percentage of No-Till acres and 73rd in the State for Soybeans Percentage of No-Till acres.

In 2007 Hancock County Tillage Transect gave us a different picture.

In 2007, we ranked 31st in the State for Corn Percentage and 1st in the State for Soybeans Percentage!!!

The FY 2007 financial summary of obligated contracts for voluntary implementation of conservation practices in Hancock County through 2002 Farm Bill programs attributes to \$207,737.72 EQIP and WHIP funds to apply conservation practices which address resource concerns. Although the technical assistance and conservation planning efforts are more difficult to capture as a monetary format, this summary report documents that the NRCS involvement in the conservation partnership is putting conservation on the land in Hancock County. The progress summary reported in the NRCS Performance Reporting System (PRS) includes:

- 3347 acres Conservation Plans written for Cropland
- 363 acres Conservation Plans written for grazing land
- 129 acres Land Treated for Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- 3206 acres Cropland with conservation applied to address soil quality
- 3303 acres of land with conservation applied to address water quality

Hopefully, land owners will continue to take advantage of these partnering efforts and stop in at the USDA Greenfield Service Center to discuss the development of a conservation plan for their land that addresses resource concerns and protects all natural resources. We look forward to the New Farm Bill programs, visit the Indiana NRCS website at: www.in.nrcs.gov for more information or visit our office at: USDA Service Center, 1101 W. Main St., Greenfield, IN 46140. 317/462-2283 ext. 3.

NRCS Statewide Conservation Accomplishments:

Completed thanks to the close working relationship with partnership employees & agencies

- ☼ Wrote conservation plans for over 300,000 acres
- ☼ Applied conservation on over 391,000 acres of cropland to improve soil quality
- ☼ Applied conservation on over 441,000 acres to improve water quality
- ☼ Applied conservation on almost 48,000 acres of grazing and forest land
- ☼ Applied almost 69,000 acres of conservation on non-federal land to
 - improve fish and wildlife habitat quality
- ☼ Created, restored or enhanced almost 6,000 acres of wetlands
- ☼ Put 49 additional Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans in place
- ☼ Applied over 55 new Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans
- ☼ 7,540 conservation practices applied to the land

Caption: Kenny and Jeff Phares – River Friendly Farmer Award



Caption: Tom Nigh presenting Susan Bodkin with the Natural Resource Stewardship Award



Caption: Greg Kleiman – 2007 Conservation Farm Award, Tom Tucker was unable to attend due to the weather.



Caption: Conservation Placemats Contest Winners – l to r; Zach Franklin, Ethan Knoblock, Makayla Troxel, Olivia Madison, Paige Cecil (absent) and Luke Cope.

