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Winter Cover

Hoosier Headlines

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Heart to Heart with RAYNOR

Good communication skills are key to success in life, work and relationships. Without effective communication, a message can turn into error, misunderstanding or frustration by being misinterpreted or poorly delivered. Especially in today's highly informational and technological environment, it has become increasingly important to have good communication skills.

When we take the time to acquire and hone good communication skills, we open ourselves up to better relationships. I want to encourage NRCS staff, partners, and customers to continue to improve both our internal and external communication with each other.



Jerry Raynor,
Indiana State Conservationist

We've recently been honored with visits from our national leaders and we are expecting a few more over the next two months. Most recently, Undersecretary Northey visited our southwest area to meet with our staff and local landowners and Secretary Perdue met with landowners in Indianapolis for a conservation round-table. This January, Chief Lohr will be attending the 2020 IASWCD Conference as the keynote speaker. We are looking forward to spending some time with the Chief and hearing about the great things we have to look forward to for the future of conservation.

Thank you to all our volunteers who participated in the 2019 National FFA Convention and Expo. This year's convention hosted a record attendance of almost 70,000 students from across the country and we used every opportunity to reach out to these FFA members and introduce them to NRCS. Eighty-four NRCS and partnership staff volunteers put in a total of 724 hours of time during this event.

We are in the midst of a special time of year. During this holiday season, let me encourage you to relax and spend some quality time sharing with families and friends. The holidays give us some much-needed time to rest, but it also provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the past year's activities and to set goals for the coming year. I anticipate a bright future for Indiana NRCS in the coming year. You, our NRCS family and partners, give so much of your time and efforts in conserving our precious natural resources and caring for the land. I am truly thankful for you and wish you Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

Employee Spotlight

SHANE JOHNSON, Engineering Technician - Greencastle CDT

Q: As one of the newest NRCS employees, please help us get to know you better. Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I was born in Illinois and moved to Clay County when I was about four. After graduating high school, I attended Indiana State University where I studied Industrial Engineering Technology. I spent about twenty years in manufacturing before I decided that it was time to do something else and made a major career change.

My wife, Emily, and I have been married for twenty-five years this year and we have one daughter, Shelby. We have lived in Putnam County for about twenty-two years on family ground that has been in Emily's family for many years. Shelby has recently gotten married, so we are trying to adjust to the "empty nest" lifestyle.

Q: How did you become interested in conservation?

To be honest, I answered a job ad. After leaving the manufacturing world, I worked for a local farmer for about two years and it was at the end of that time that I saw an ad in the local newspaper looking for a director for the Putnam County SWCD. The board took a chance on me and I spent two years as the director. It was during that time that the passion started, and my eyes were opened to the SWCD and NRCS world.

Q: How did your past work experience prepare you for your current position with NRCS?

Farming full time and working for the SWCD gave me valuable insight to what farmers are faced with regarding conservation. Time, money and equipment requirements are just a few of the factors that they must deal with daily. That insight helps me when I go out to do a site visit and meet with the landowner or farmer to understand their needs, and then I can apply that to



Shane Johnson, Engineering Technician

the design work that I do for them. My past management experience in the manufacturing world helps me everyday in time management, engaging with new people and serving on teams and committees.

Q: What are you looking forward to most in your position?

I'm looking forward to meeting new people. Working for NRCS will allow me to meet and work with great people in the counties that we cover. Even though we are there to help them, I know that there are times that I will learn just as much as they do. The other great

opportunity that this position provides is serving on teams and committees with other NRCS employees. I am looking forward to not only serving my area, but Indiana.

Q: When you aren't working for NRCS, what do you like to do in your spare time?

My wife, daughter, son-in-law and I love to take weekend trips to try new restaurants and explore new locally owned stores and shops. On Saturdays through the summer months, I spend my evenings at Lincoln Park Speedway working in the pits on a dirt track car with one of my best friends.

Q: Do you have any professional or personal goals for 2020?

2020 will still be a learning year for me. I am looking forward to becoming more proficient in my design work and being able to do things on my own. I am also the new Earth Team Coordinator for the Southwest Area and I am looking forward to that new challenge.

NE Fall Engineering Tour Held

Submitted by Mike Cox, State Conservation Engineer

The Northeast Area held a fall engineering tour on October 24, 2019 in Ft. Wayne and Adams County. NRCS & ISDA employees from the Albion and Huntington Conservation Delivery Teams attended the meeting/tour organized by Andrew Pursifull, NE Area Engineer.

Some of the highlights from the tour included a visit to the GME Testing Inc. Lab in Ft. Wayne, a presentation by D2 on Geotextiles and Geogrids and a visit to a Community Storage Pond in Adams County.

The GME Testing Inc. Lab is an American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) accredited lab which is able to classify and test soils for earthen liners for animal waste storage in addition to performing tests for concrete. The lab has done testing for several waste storage ponds designed by NRCS and constructed with EQIP funding.

The visit to the Community Waste Storage pond in Adams County (Girod Farms) was highlighted by a demonstration of a floating Nuhn Agitator by Dan Girod which can be used in any open waste storage pit for agitation of the manure and mixing of the solids to assist with land application of the manure. The two Community Waste Storage ponds in Adams County were constructed with Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding and were heavily utilized during the extremely wet winter 2018/spring 2019 by many Amish livestock producers.

A big thanks to the NE area for hosting the tour and Andrew Pursifull for organizing the meeting/tour.



Andrew Pursifull, NE Agricultural Engineer, discusses the floating Nuhn Agitator to attendees.



Floating Nuhn Agitator in action.

Kudos to...

Mike Wigginton, Soil Scientist, Dena Anderson, SE Area Resource Soil Scientist, John Allen, Assistant State Soil Scientist, Rob Miller, Civil Engineering Technician, Chris Torp, Soil Conservationist, Brianne Lowe, State Biologist, Celia Tharp, District Conservationist, Andrew Pursifull, Ag Engineer, Akhtar Soomro, Carto Tech, Amie Lester, Technical Team Leader, George Reger, Resource Conservationist, Brian Daggy, Natural Resource Conservationist, Angie Garrison, District Conservationist, Nan Hammel, Resource Specialist and Brandy Daggett, District Conservationist for helping with the FFA Environmental and Natural Resources Field event as part of the FFA National Convention. These individuals were dedicated enough to work with the students as volunteer guides, or practicum staff on a cold and wet, muddy day that started with rain and ended with snow. Their dedication and perseverance was exemplary and I and National FFA greatly appreciate their participation and assistance. Over 150 students from over 40 states participated in this year's Field Event. This event could not have run as smoothly as it did without their assistance. - **Submitted by Rick Neilson, State Soil Scientist**



Retiree Roundup

Submitted by Jane Hardisty, SCS/NRCS Retirees State Representative

I am so pleased to start an addition to the Hoosier Headlines to keep you informed of our SCS/NRCS Retirees. We will include updates as they exist. I am the new state representative for the Indiana retirees and am joined by other team members Rebecca Fletcher, Pam Davidson and Geri Bond. Our goal is to keep our list of retirees up to date and keep in touch with them.

We held our annual Retirees Luncheon on October 1st at the NRCS State Office. There were over 40 folks in attendance. We had a great time of networking and catching up on families. We were able to meet the State Conservationist, Jerry Raynor, and learn more about his background. We were also joined by "The Frog Lady" (Pam Davidson) as she shared humorist quotes and worked the crowd during introductions.

We would like to extend a request to you all that if you hear of any updates regarding our retirees, please share those with us. We want to keep in touch with our SCS/NRCS families regarding unique experiences, illnesses, deaths, and family in general. You can contact me at Dirtlady52@aol.com or Geri Bond at bondgeri@sbcglobal.net.

We are excited to have more new retirees joining the retiree family. At this time they include Becky Fletcher, Fred Glover, Mike Wigginton, Amy Lybarger and we have always considered Karen Faith as part of the NRCS family. We wish them the best in retirement and their next adventures.



Attendees of the 2019 Annual Indiana NRCS Retiree Luncheon held at the Indiana State Office.

Partnership Websites

IN Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Bi-Weekly Updates: <http://iaswcd.org/news/newsletter/>

IN Conservation Partnership: <http://icp.iaswcd.org>

IN Dept. of Environmental Management: www.in.gov/idem

IN Dept. of Natural Resources: www.in.gov/dnr

IN State Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation: <http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue Cooperative Extension Service: <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/>

USDA Farm Service Agency: www.in.fsa.usda.gov

National FFA Career Event and Expo

The National Future Farmers of America (FFA) convention was held in Indianapolis, Indiana on October 30 to November 1, 2019. As part of this event, Indiana's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff members and members of the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP) participated in the Environmental and Natural Resources Career Development Event (CDE) and Career Convention and Expo.

The National FFA Environmental and Natural Resources CDE is a competitive event that allows students to apply classroom knowledge to real-life situations. This event focuses on testing students' problem solving and decision-making skills in environmental and natural resources. Each team competed at local and state levels for the privilege of representing their home state at the National FFA Convention & Expo. The event, held at the Indiana State Fairgrounds in Indianapolis and Dull's Tree Farm in Thorntown, Indiana, is one of many educational activities at the national convention in which FFA members practice the lessons learned in agricultural education classes. And while the weather was less than ideal with snow, wind and rain for the field practicum event, it didn't keep the students from competing. Approximately 155 students representing 44 teams from across the country participated in the CDE event.

In addition to the CDE events, Indiana NRCS also participated in the 2019 National FFA Career Convention & Expo on October 30 through November 2nd. As an exhibitor, we were able to build awareness of our agency while interacting with attendees. New this year, we included slake test demonstrations to attract a larger audience to our booth and get them excited about soil health.

On Thursday, October 31st, Chief Lohr visited the National FFA Convention to participate in a #SpeakAg panel discussion with industry experts including former NRCS Chief Knight. The #SpeakAg Dialogues provided a forum for discussion and effective conversation to expose FFA students to multiple sides of agricultural issues including how farmers contribute to the sustainability of the industry by focusing on soil health. Chief Lohr also visited the NRCS exhibit and took part in the slake test demonstration.

Thank you to all of the NRCS and ICP volunteers who volunteered for these events. Over the three days, we had a total of 84 staff members work 724 hours. We couldn't have had a success program without you! We look forward to another great year in 2020!



FFA Students participate in the soils portion of the Dull's Farm field practicum.



Chief Lohr visits the NRCS Booth. L to R: Scott Wagner, Jerry Raynor, Jenny Vogel, Chief Lohr, Lisa Bolton



Scott Wagner, Agricultural Engineer, demonstrates the slake test to FFA students at the 2019 FFA Expo.

Personnel Updates

SELECTIONS FROM VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Kelly Bushong, District Conservationist (PTL) at Albion; effective 12-8-19.
 Ben Zuercher, District Conservationist (PTL) at Greensburg; effective 11-10-19.
 Travis Gogel, District Conservationist (PTL) at Princeton; effective 11-10-19.
 Brandy Daggett, District Conservationist (PTL) at Lebanon; effective 10-27-19.
 Doug Walker, District Conservationist (PTL) at Greencastle; effective 10-27-19.
 Frank Jones, District Conservationist (PTL) at Huntington; effective 10-27-19.
 Nathan Lind, District Conservationist (PTL) at Salem; effective 11-24-19.
 Mary Fisher, Program Assistant at Lebanon; effective 12-22-19.
 Christina Gates, District Conservationist at Bloomfield FO; effective 1-5-20.
 Darlene Florence, District Conservationist at Knox; effective 1-5-20.

RETIREMENTS

Michael Wigginton, Lafayette AO, effective 11-1-19

OTHER STAFFING

Nancy Hammel, Lebanon CDT, Resignation, effective 12-7-19

Sharrona Moore honored for Lawrence Community Gardens



Sharrona Moore speaks to Indiana NRCS employees at 2019 Diversity Days

Sharrona Moore learned at an early age growing food doesn't have to be difficult. As a child she spent weeks in the summer on a great uncle's farm discovering the joy of gardening and eating vegetables straight from the fields.

In the years since, Moore, 44, has grown her own herbs or vegetables on her patio or in her yard in Lawrence, in the Indianapolis metro area. Most recently, she's turned her gardening prowess to a project to help her far east side Indianapolis neighborhood.

Moore, a barber and a comedian, discovered she had another dream. She wanted to start a community garden to help meet the fresh food needs of the people in her neighborhood. With training from Purdue University's Urban Agriculture Certificate program she learned how to multiply her growing capacity, to scale up from backyard gardener to food producer.

Now, with the help of community volunteers and local company Monarch Beverage, Moore has spearheaded the creation of an operation, roughly the size of two football fields, providing healthy fruits and vegetables to her neighbors in need.

Because of her outstanding efforts, Sharron Moore has been recognized as the third place recipient for the National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees (NOPBNRCSE) Lloyd Wright Small Farmer of the Year for 2019.

Mark Your Calendars

DECEMBER

- 16: Northeast Area Conservation Delivery Training
- 17: State Office Employee Association Meeting
Area Conservationist Meeting
- 18: Leadership Team Meeting
- 25: Offices Closed

JANUARY

- 1: Offices Closed
- 7: Northeast Area Meeting
- 8: Southeast Area Meeting
- 15: Leadership Team Meeting

JANUARY continued

- 28: Northwest Area Meeting
- 29: Southwest Area Meeting

FEBRUARY

- 4: Northeast Area Meeting
- 5: SAC/FAC Meeting
- 12: Southeast Area Meeting
- 19: Leadership Team Meeting
- 20: Supervisor Training
- 25: Northwest Area Meeting
- 26: Southwest Area Meeting