

Hoosier Headlines

Issue 81

April 2020

Our field staff are still out in the field working while making sure to social distance themselves from others.

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Heart to Heart with RAYNOR

In light of the current pandemic, we are doing everything we can to help protect our employees, farmers and forestland owners while still trying to provide the same great service to our customers.

USDA is continuing to take proactive protective measures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. As you are aware, all Indiana USDA offices and service centers are operating at a Level II status through May 1, 2020. While we are operational, customers should contact their local service center to make arrangements to complete necessary paperwork by alternative means, such as over the phone, electronically, or by mail.

Additionally, the Leadership Team has postponed most larger type meetings and trainings through May 31. If you were previously planning to attend a local, area or statewide training please consult with your supervisor prior to attending the training. Statewide Standing Committees are also being advised to postpone meetings and/or find alternative ways to conduct business through May 31.

It is first and foremost our goal to keep staff and clients as safe as possible during this unprecedented time, but we will continue to stay committed to delivering USDA services while taking safety measures in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Please remember that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to assist employees with any personal, family, and work-related issues and concerns you may have that could affect your health and well-being, and productivity. You and your family members may contact the EAP 24/7 for free professional counseling by calling Federal Occupational Health at 1-800- 222- 0364, 1- 888- 262- 7848 (TTY/TDD). The EAP is free and confidential.

The Leadership Team will continue to keep you updated as we hear from our National Office. Updated information related to the coronavirus and current status of USDA Service Centers, temporary service center closures, and online options for farmers can also be found by visiting: <https://www.farmers.gov/coronavirus>.



*Jerry Raynor,
Indiana State Conservationist*

Employee Spotlight

Daniel Potter, State Office Assistant

Q: As the one of the newest NRCS employees, please help us get to know you better.

I was born on November 27th in Banner Elk, North Carolina. I grew up in a small town called Roan Mountain, Tennessee. I attended Cloudland High School, and shortly after graduating I enlisted in the United States Army as an 88M (Motor Transport Operator). I was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas (Big Red One) and Fort Stewart, Georgia (3rd ID). I deployed to Iraq twice for a total of 27 months in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I was in the Army for six and a half years. After exiting the military, I started working for the Department of Veterans Affairs and attended Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU). I have an associate degree in Business Management.

Q: Where did you work and what did you do before coming to Indiana NRCS?

I worked for the Defense Logistics Agency at Crane Naval Base as a Transportation Assistant briefly before coming to NRCS. Most of my federal experience came from the Department of Veterans Affairs. I started out as a MVO (Motor Vehicle Operator) for the Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) in Casper, Wyoming. I also worked at the Louisville VAMC as a MVO, and then took a promotion as a Transportation Assistant at the Grand Junction VAMC. I have 12 years of federal service

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

While working at the Department of Veterans Affairs as a Transportation Assistant for the VTS, I was the acting Mobility Manager for the program for two years. I ran the day to day operations of the VTS program. Managing five drivers, six vehicles, one beneficiary



*Daniel Potter,
State Office Assistant*

travel clerk and coordinating the daily manifest for veteran pick-up to medical appointments.

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

This position will allow me to learn from the ground up and build a career with NRCS. I have had some amazing on the job training from Lisa Bolton and Shelby Ruffner. With the skills and experience I have developed from the Army and Department of Veterans Affairs; this will give me an opportunity to build new working relationships and learn current things within the NRCS. My goal is to learn as much as possible and help the NRCS office.

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

When I'm not working, I enjoy spending time with my wife (Keely) and kids, Madison (8) Savannah (6) and Caleb (2). We like to travel a lot, some of our favorite spots are Gatlinburg, Tennessee and Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. We enjoy going to zoo's, museums, fishing, bowling, and many other activities. We also like to travel to see parks and national forests, waterfalls, hiking trails, and historical monuments.

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

I have an associate degree in Business Management, I only have a few classes left and will finish my bachelor's degree soon. Everyone I have met here has been very kind, and I am looking forward to growing professionally with this awesome agency.

Successes of Cover Crop Reseeding

Submitted by Stephanie McLain, State Soil Health Specialist

Extremely wet conditions in 2019 allowed for some new and innovative adaptations to our conservation practices. One practice in particular was adapted and modified to meet farmers needs during these extreme times - cover crops.

Indiana allowed a variance to the cover crop standard which gave credit to existing cover crops that were allowed to reseed and count as part of the cover crop seeding. This meant that cover crops seeded in the fall of 2018 and remained in prevent plant field in the spring of 2019 were then knocked down and put on the surface of the soil and allowed to regrow. What do these fields and cover crops look like now?

Examples like this one from Delaware County show a field with cereal rye actively growing. A mix of cereal rye and rape was flail moved last summer and the resulting growth looks like this in the spring of 2020. This field received 2.5" of rain the last weekend in March and instead of losing soil and nutrients, this growing cover crop is doing its job.

I am interested in completing a field review of sites that had 2018 fall seeded cover crops knocked down and reseed in the summer of 2019. If you have worked with a farmer that tried this practice, please contact me at: stephanie.mclain@usda.gov.



Cover crop field that resulted from cereal rye flail mowed in August 2019 and allowed to reseed.

Kudos to...

Brandy Daggett, Genny Helt, Dave Hines, Kristi Kennedy, Curtis Knueven, Ben Lambeck, Dan Luczynski, Miranda McGillem, Cindy Muffett, Kathy Ownbey, Jeremy Palmer, Kevin Shide, and Randy VanMatre for taking time out of their busy schedules to help test and provide thoughtful feedback for the program payment calculators. - **Submitted by Adam Heichelbech, Financial Assistance Program Specialist.**

Soil Health Champion, Dan DeSutter: Indiana University's Environmental Resilience Institute has named its annual list of Hoosier Resilience Heroes, recognizing individuals and groups statewide for their efforts to prepare Hoosiers for climate change and promote safe, healthy communities. This year's recipients include professionals and volunteers dedicated to sustainable agriculture, flood control, clean energy, environmental justice, and other aspects of environmental protection and resilience.

Dan DeSutter, a farmer in west-central Indiana, has helped educate others on the benefits of improved soil health, including benefits that help mitigate climate change.

Dan's advocacy for no-till farming, cover crops, and grazing has raised the profile of practices that contribute to building up carbon in soil--and help mitigate. By highlighting the true cost of conventional farming practices and putting forth a broader vision for what is possible on the land, Dan is spreading a critical message. - **Indiana University's Environmental Resilience Institute**



Hoosier Resilience Hero
Dan DeSutter
Farmer, DeSutter Farms

Retiree Roundup

Submitted by Jane Hardisty, SCS/NRCS Retirees State Representative

I have been thinking about all you wonderful NRCS employees as we go through this situation with the coronavirus. I know it has turned all our worlds upside down. As always, NRCS employees are resilient and creative and will continue to serve your customers. Stay safe and know that I still care about each and every one of you deeply.

I have been concerned with my 90 year mom and 93 year old dad during this time. Then I realized I also fit in that category over 65, dang!! We put my parents under "house arrest" and limited anyone going into their house except my sister and myself. We are trying to take all the precautions we can. My dad already had cabin fever so you can imagine he has some grumpy days.

I have kept in contact with our SCS/NRCS retirees the pass month and also shared with them how much I care about them and to be safe. I shared with them the CDC guidelines of dealing with the COVID-19 and encouraged them to behave themselves at their age and do what they are told to do. I have also kept in contact with them on updates and changes from the national level regarding retirement issues and Congressional updates.

The only updates or news I have at this time is unfortunately to share some retirees that passed away over the past few months.

- Bert Moore, Soil Conservation Technician, White County, September 2019
- Enno Schmidt, Engineer, Wabash County, January 2020
- Bobby Little (not sure of his last position) February 2020
- Bill Wilson, Soil Conservation Technician, Washington County, March 2020

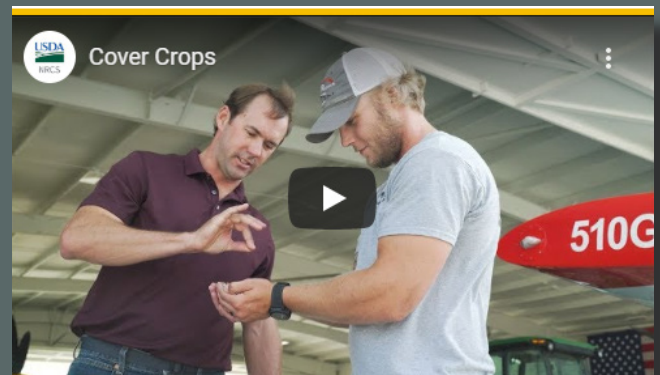
Everyone please take care of yourself and your families and know I am thinking of you.

Conservation Practice Videos Available

During the February NACD Conference, NRCS Chief, Matt Lohr unveiled NRCS' new video series, *Conservation at Work*. This video series consists of short, 90 second videos that highlight common conservation practices.

The videos shine the spotlight on farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners from across the U.S. who tell us their own conservation stories, and how practices are helping them protect and improve resources and save time and money. By sharing the conservation successes of our customers, we hope the videos will help educate our customers and the general public and motivate more farmers and landowners to consider conservation.

I encourage you to check out the videos at www.farmers.gov/conservationatwork and share with your partners as they may want to use them for field days or other educational events.



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

Follow Farmers During #Plant2020

It's planting season and USDA is closely following spring planting across the country. We encourage you to follow along with our #plant2020 campaign, or even better, send us photos of how planting is going on your farm.

As you know, many farmers across the country faced challenges last year when it came to planting their spring crop. Flooding and excessive moisture led to nearly 20 million prevented plant acres, the highest number ever recorded. This year, most producers are seeing more favorable planting conditions when it comes to weather. But they are facing yet another challenge – putting a crop in the ground during a global pandemic. With many states implementing “stay at home” orders, agriculture was deemed an essential industry as all producers know that farm work and livestock care can't be paused.

GET INVOLVED

We invite you to send us your planting progress by sending an email to sharingoursuccesses@usda.gov with your photo, photo description, your city and state, and your Twitter handle (if you have one).

More information is available at: <https://www.farmers.gov/plant2020> which also includes a link to the story map of already submitted photos.



Stuart Thornton plants corn in early April 2020 in Courtland, Alabama.



Jake Isley plants soybeans in April in Palmyra, Michigan.

Working with Urban Ag and Small Farms

Submitted by Jill Reinhart, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships

Last December Indiana NRCS convened a focus group made up of District Conservationists and Area Staff impacted by urban/small farm workload. Input from this team helped direct the Leadership Team's approach to working in this space. We are focusing NRCS work with these customers on conservation technical assistance and financial assistance through our programs. We are working with partners to better collaborate and fill the other workload needs of this customer base. This includes assistance with production (what to plant, rotations, etc.), food and soil safety, regulatory issues, community development (farmers markets, wellness connections, etc.), and education programs. We are using a combination of partner agreements with SWCDs, more focused collaboration with Purdue Extension's Urban Ag program, and considering an urban outreach position at the State Office.

Since the focus group met, NRCS has been designated the lead agency on urban farm issues, making this coordination even more important. Please share issues, concerns and success stories with your supervisors, Area Conservationists, and Kris Vance, State Public Affairs Specialist. We will all work together to continue to address this workload and provide service to our urban and small farm producers.

Personnel Updates

SELECTIONS FROM VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Kris Vance, State Public Affairs Specialist at Indianapolis, effective 3-15-20.
 McKenna Eltzroth, Pathway Student Intern (Soil Conservationist) at Delphi, effective 5-10-20.
 Alejandro Carrero Muñiz, Soil Conservationist at Rensselaer CDT, effective 6-7-20
 Emily Kelly, Engineering Technician at Princeton CDT, effective 4-26-20
 Rachel Boucher, Pathway Recent Graduate (Soil Conservationist) at Salem CDT, effective 6-7-20.
 Charles Graham, Pathway Student Intern (Engineer) at Princeton, effective 5-24-20.
 William Tripp, Resource Soil Scientist at Lafayette, effective 3-29-20.

TRANSFER

Gary Parks, Engineering Technician, Transfer to Forest Service; effective 4-26-20

REASSIGNMENTS

Jeffrey Woodward, Soil Scientist, Reassignment to Missouri, effective 3-15-20
 Brittany Wolford, Soil Conservationist; Reassignment to Maryland; effective 5-10-20



Save the Date

May 12, 2020 * 9:00 AM—10:30 AM

Indiana Conservation Partnership Webinar

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Introduction
Jill Reinhart, NRCS
 ICP Annual Accomplishments
Jordan Seger, ISDA
 Updates on Hemp Production in Indiana
Marguerite Bolt, Purdue Extension
 New ICP Unfunded Cooperative Agreement and Vehicle Use
Roger Kult, NRCS
 Purdue Extension Update
Rick Foster, Purdue Extension
 CRP & New Farm Stimulus Package
Stephanie Alexander, FSA
 Questions
Marion Welsh, Purdue Extension

JOIN THE ZOOM MEETING:

<https://zoom.us/j/95005332812?pwd=dDZDY24yNXVoUk5pQWZZTDMwbFdRdz09>

Meeting ID: 95005332812
 Password: boilers

This meeting will be recorded
 and available within 48 hours.

Equal opportunity providers, employers and lenders.

All employees are invited to attend the ICP Webinar being held on May 12th starting at 9:00 AM (Eastern).

JOIN ZOOM MEETING

<https://zoom.us/j/95005332812?pwd=dDZDY24yNXVoUk5pQWZZTDMwbFdRdz09>

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DIAL BY YOUR LOCATION

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 Password: 556952

Find your local number:
<https://zoom.us/u/azzR9tJq>

Mark Your Calenders

APRIL

28: Northwest Area Meeting
 29: Southwest Area Meeting

MAY

5: Northeast Area Meeting
 5-6: Virtual Retirement Training
 6: SAC/FAC meeting
 12: ICP Webinar
 13: Southeast Area Meeting
 19: State Soil Conservation Board Meeting
 Area Conservationist Meeting

MAY continued

20: Monthly Leadership Team Meeting
 26: Northwest Area Meeting
 27: Southwest Area Meeting

JUNE

2: Northeast Area Meeting
 3: SAC/FAC Meeting
 10: Southeast Area Meeting
 17: Monthly Leadership Team Meeting
 23: Northwest Area Meeting
 24: Southwest Area Meeting