

Hoosier Headlines

Issue 90

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- Submitted by Susannah Hinds, NW Grazing Specialist

In This Issue:

Employee Spotlight: Jeff Cannaday	2
Interagency Wetland Course Held	3
Employee Kudos	3
Resources for Historically Underserved	4
EQIP Mythbusters Factsheet Available	4
Partnership Websites	4
Indiana NRCS State Officials Visit SE	5
Indiana NRCS Photo Contest Winners	5
Personnel Update	6
Handling Uncomfortable Situations	6
National FFA Volunteer Opportunity	6

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Heart to Heart with RAYNOR

We are quickly approaching the end of the year and I can see our Indiana NRCS employees are hard at work. Because of your dedication, we are almost done obligating FY22 dollars and have obtained additional funding for EQIP and CSP. Indiana NRCS will have distributed over \$41 million in financial assistance to Indiana farmers during this current fiscal year. Thank you for your commitment to putting conservation on the ground. As we get close to closing out FY22, I want to encourage NRCS employees to continue to meet their conservation goals and help people help the land.



*Jerry Raynor,
Indiana State Conservationist*

The 2022 Indiana State Fair just wrapped up and I want to thank all the NRCS employees who helped staff the Pathway to Water Quality exhibit. Last year the exhibit expanded to include the new soil health area located at the old Boy Scouts of America exhibit. The soil health area continues to improve with a new urban soil health area which demonstrates several conservation practices that help protect small farm and gardens. If you visited the fair this year, I hope you made sure to stop by and see it.

Our volunteer opportunities don't stop with the fair. Just around the bend, the 2022 National FFA Convention and Career Expo will be returning to Indianapolis, taking place from October 26-28. This annual convention hosts more than 64,000 attendees from across the country and is a great opportunity to reach out to FFA members and introduce them to NRCS programs, employment and volunteer opportunities. As in years past, NRCS will be supporting the Natural Resources and Environment Judging event and we are asking for volunteer assistance from partnership staff. This event will take place on Thursday, October 27 from 11AM-2PM at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. If you would like to volunteer for this event please contact Kris Vance at: kris.vance@usda.gov.

As we approach the end of the fiscal year, I want to thank all of you for the hard work you have put into getting our Farm Bill programs obligated and providing conservation planning and technical assistance to our customers. I am excited about Indiana; the good work you are doing is reflected in the amount of conservation being put on the ground. I look forward to what we can all accomplish together in 2023.

Employee Spotlight

Jeff Cannaday, Northwest Area Engineer

Tell us a little bit about yourself:

I was born and raised in Anderson, Indiana. I attended the former Highland High School. After I graduated high school, I enlisted in the US Marine Corps and served six years as an infantryman. During my enlistment, I was deployed to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm with the 2nd Light Armored Infantry Battalion. I also spent a total of one year on the Mediterranean Sea with 2nd LAI aboard two US Navy ships, the USS Tortuga and the USS Shreveport which are both troop carrier type ships. My last two years of enlistment were spent with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 29 at New River Air Station working in the Operations Office. After the Marine Corps, I attended Purdue University where I obtained an engineering degree from the Agricultural and Biological Engineering department. My lovely wife and I have four beautiful daughters ranging in ages from 14 down to 7. We attend the Bible Baptist Church up in Rensselaer.

How long have you worked for NRCS?

I started working for NRCS in May of 2000.

What is your current job title and the city where your office is located?

I am currently the Area Engineer for the Northwest Area, located in Lafayette. I started in Lafayette during fall of 2008.

How did you become interested in conservation?

I have always enjoyed the outdoors and my dad always taught me to appreciate nature, so I think being interested in conservation was just a natural consequence of sorts. To be honest, I really didn't know much about what NRCS did until I had an interview with Phil McCloud at Purdue just before I graduated. I had already accepted a job with The Schneider Corporation, but after my chat with Phil, I thought this was a better fit for me given my interests. I liked the idea of working outside and taking care of the things I care about, versus sitting at a desk all day figuring out how to jam more house lots into a subdivision to get more profit for someone else. At least that's what I envisioned I'd be doing elsewhere.

What do you enjoy most working for Indiana landowners?

If I had to really narrow it down, I'd say my favorite part of this job is figuring out how to help people who really need it. For that reason, the Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) is probably my favorite program to work in. Although I don't enjoy the



Jeff Cannaday, Northwest Area Engineer

natural disasters and the consequential property and life loss and all folks suffer that typically initiate the EWP process, I really do like helping them with recovery efforts afterwards. Second to this, I'd have to say I like working with landowners on wetland easement projects. Wetlands are something I really like working on and helping people restore and enhance wetlands to turn their properties into something they'll enjoy is pretty satisfying to me. I guess as I get some years behind me, my focus has really turned away from engineering being the most important aspect of my job. Now I see taking care of people and the relationships we develop with them as the real goal for me. Engineering is just the "way in the door" for me to get to know people and try and figure out how to relate to them and help them with what they need.

Do you have any advice for younger/newer employees?

There are three things. First, "this too shall pass..." Things get stressful at times for sure. But it won't last. Don't let it get to you! The second thing would be, and it really helps to get this one down early to help you out with the first one, figure out what really matters and what doesn't. Focus on what matters. Thirdly, to borrow from a Marine Corps infantryman's philosophy that was adopted from a hybrid of their motto "Semper Fidelis... always faithful," go with "Semper Gumbi... always flexible." You're an imperfect person, working on an imperfect project, with an imperfect landowner on an imperfect Earth. You have to be flexible in order to keep the bus rolling down the road. Mike Tyson allegedly stated, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the nose." Stuff is going to happen along the way and your plan is only a good place to start so figure out the workarounds and keep driving on.

What has been the most challenging part of the job?

The most challenging part of the job for me has been the intermingling of program policy and dollars and engineering standards. I've come to think of these and other things we have to adhere to as a stack of soil sieves. If you can put your design and project on top of the stack, shake the tar out of it for awhile and it comes out on bottom, you're good to go!

Do you have any professional or personal goals for 2022?

I was going to give up procrastination in 2022, but I think I'll wait until 2023 for that. There are some fairly high-tech hydraulic modeling programs I'd like to learn this next year though.

Interagency Wetland Course Held

Submitted by John Allen, State Soil Scientist

During the week of May 10-13, NRCS partnered with the Army Corp of Engineers, Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) in teaching a Regulatory IV: Interagency Wetland Identification and Delineation course in Indianapolis. Most of the attendees were IDEM and INDOT employees. The basis of this training was from the 1972 Clean Water Act. Even though the law is different than the 1985 Farm Bill that NRCS uses in wetland delineations for agricultural land, the Corp does use a three-part structure (vegetation, hydrology, and hydric soils) in their wetland determinations.

Retired NRCS Soil Scientist, Rick Neilson and State Soil Scientist, John Allen conducted hydric soil indicators and hydric soils background

presentations to a group of about 35 people. The morning classroom sessions were followed up by field visits at four different parks in Indianapolis during the afternoon and concluded with a field session on Friday morning.

The class broke out into several smaller groups, each doing wetland delineations in various areas of the park's wooded sites, looking at vegetation, hydrology and soils, while filling out a form with not only a soils description, plant identification and hydrology, but indicators of each category to determine if the site fits a wetland. Along with Rick and John, NRCS Resource Soil Scientist, Will Tripp also offered his knowledge and soils expertise along with outreach during the field portion of this class while also acquiring some cross training.



NRCS Partnered with the Army Corp to provide REG IV (hydric soils) Training to INDOT and IDEM Employees

Kudos to...

Sara Day (District Conservationist), Chad Schotter (District Conservationist), and Andrea Baker (District Conservationist) for their hard work, during EQIP sign up, for the northeast Soil Health Assessment & Demo Trainings. The three of them did an excellent job preparing, coordinating, and implementing the trainings held in April and May. I greatly appreciated their hard work on the trainings and so did the northeast staff that attended. - **Submitted by Brian Musser (District Conservationist)**

Brianne Lowe (State Biologist) for all your efforts on Ruffed Grouse Society project. From pushing along to meet all the deadlines, content and planning, being in the actual video and, of course, for securing and supporting the federal funding to make it all happen. I have seen the video used now multiple times with the public and once in the government sector and I know it is rotated in use on the Woods on Wheels traveling forestry exhibit. I hope the video continues to educate more people on the importance of young forests. I'm hearing of similar education trends on the horizon here in Indiana, so I believe the ball is rolling and the concept and education is getting out there. - **Submitted by Jeff Page (Ruffed Grouse Society)**

Chris Lee (Princeton CDT Leader), Stephanie Mitchell (District Conservationist), Will Fett (State Outreach Coordinator), Jerod Chew (District Conservationist), Mike Hughes (District Conservationist) and Ashley Pine (District Conservationist)

for their involvement in helping to develop three Indiana NRCS Programs videos. The team went above and beyond their current roles by assisting the public affairs staff with the planning and implementation of these three videos which included prepping landowners and also taking part in the actual video production with interviews, helping additional staff with talking points and participating in b-roll. This was a complicated task as video production was held during planting season, which made it difficult to work with local farmers. Their help is imperative to this video series being successful. - **Submitted by Kris Vance (State Public Affairs Specialist)**

Larencia Williams (Lebanon CDT Soil Conservationist) for serving a 120 day detail to Dubois County where we are having difficulty filling the position. This is one of the busiest counties in the state. Larencia has come in completely undaunted by the task and has risen above any and all expectations. - **Submitted by Chris Lee (Princeton CDT Leader)**



Special congratulations to **Allicia Carpenter Jones (Soil Conservationist)** who joined Indiana NRCS permanently on June 6th. Allicia was a pathways intern and was recently commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved



We're excited to roll out a new guide to help historically underserved farmers and ranchers navigate USDA programs. The guide, *Get Started: A Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers*, is available online as a [digital download](#). Printed copies will be arriving at USDA service centers soon. The Get Started guide serves as a one-stop shop for minority, women, veteran, beginning, and limited-resource producers, and it's another way

that we're working to advance equity and improve access to our programs.

It covers everything from planning a service center visit and obtaining a farm number to navigating eligibility for the various technical and financial assistance programs offered across FSA, NRCS, and RMA. There is an additional focus on topics especially relevant to HUFR, such as urban and organic agriculture and heirs' property. We encourage you to use this guide as a jumping off point for conversations with historically underserved farmers who enter USDA service centers. Please offer them to producers seeking more information about farm loans, the conservation planning process, risk management, and the specifics of our various programs.

Each service center will receive 25 copies. If you exhaust your supply, additional copies can be ordered by through the distribution center website at NRCS Publications (usda.gov), by email at nrcsdistributioncenter@ia.usda.gov. Additionally, the guide can be downloaded from farmers.gov, including versions in Spanish, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, and Chinese. Other languages are available upon request. If you need assistance with ordering, please contact Brandon O'Connor at: brandon.oconnor@usda.gov.

EQIP Mythbusters Factsheet Available

Speaking of publications, we also wanted to call your attention to an internal fact sheet for NRCS, USDA staff and partners.

Developed by the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP), it dispels several common myths about the use of NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for urban agriculture. This will enable us to better explain how conservation programs can support urban farms.

For more urban conservation information:

You may also want to check out this webinar, by the OUAIP, [Urban and Innovative Agriculture 101: What the USDA is doing now](#). And if you or someone you know is hunting for public-facing resources for urban farmers, check out <https://www.farmers.gov/your-business/urban-growers> for a new at-a-glance brochure and other resources.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Myth Busters

Who It's For: Urban/Suburban, Specialty Crops, Small Acreage, and Subsistence Operations

Introduction:
Urban agriculture is one of NRCS's top five priorities, specifically "Expanding conservation tools and support to address the unique needs of urban farmers and communities nationwide." With a growing emphasis on urban agriculture, NRCS staff may be asked to help producers who are implementing EQIP or who are for some reason that might be new to NRCS or have been denied service in the past.

MYTH 1 Agricultural Product Income (land and producer eligibility)

THE MYTH:
"The farm must produce at least \$1,000 of agricultural products to be designated as an agricultural operation and to be eligible for EQIP."

HERE'S THE TRUTH:
There is no minimum agricultural income requirement or agricultural product value requirement for determining land and/or producer eligibility. People who produce food, fiber, livestock, or other agricultural products solely to provide for their families, friends, neighbors, and/or communities, and who do not sell, market, or distribute their products may be eligible for EQIP."

MYTH BUSTED!

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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

Indiana NRCS State Officials Visit Southeast

On June 22 and 23, three local soil and water conservation districts (SWCD), hosted the Indiana NRCS leadership team (LT) on a tour of southeastern Indiana.

To kick off the meeting on Tuesday, LT members learned about the Ripley County SWCD contribution agreement. This agreement provides funding to the SWCD in return for NRCS workload assistance. Over the past several years, this agreement has proved to be incredibly valuable for improved customer service by allowing the district conservationist to have more time to visit one-on-one with landowners.

After the presentation, the group headed out to the field to visit two farms in Dearborn County. The attendees were able to see firsthand how conservation practices implemented on farms have improved grazing systems. Practices like heavy use area protection pads helped eliminate erosion and runoff while alternative watering systems with fencing for pasture rotation improved the quality and quantity of forage. The water system also allowed the farmers to fence out environmentally sensitive areas the cattle previously used for drinking, such as creeks and ponds, providing better water quality for the animals and eliminating sediment and runoff into streams. The local farmers discussed how the practices and the program helped them to help their land.

The group's next stop was to an Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) site on West Laughery Creek Road in Dearborn County. During the tour, Tim Grieve, Dearborn County Highway Department Supervisor, discussed the completed EWP project and how it has benefited the community. Tim spent many hours

analyzing and submitting forms to secure EWP funds while also managing the entire project by securing the engineering firm and overseeing the project through completion. Over the past six years, the partnership secured nearly four million dollars to the county through EWP.

The group reconvened on Wednesday with a visit to Elk Lake to learn about concerns of the Elk Creek Conservancy District regarding dam management and closed out at a visit to Cornucopia Farms in Scottsburg, IN where the group indulged in a homemade lunch and tour of the farm.

In an effort to better understand the conservation and natural resource concerns throughout the state, the leadership team plans to make these trips an annual occurrence. If you have a project you would like to highlight during one of these events, please contact your supervisor.



The Leadership Team learns about pasture management practices from Clay and Natalie Cutter on Cutter Family Farms.



Tim Grieve, Highway Dept. Supervisor, shows the leadership team an EWP site.

Third Quarter Photo Contest Winners

We would like to give a BIG congratulations to our second quarter photo contest winners! See the winning photos below.

Winners will be receiving a silver 5x7 NRCS picture frame and their photos will be displayed in the Indiana State Office front foyer for three months. All photos submitted by staff, regardless if it was a winning photo or not, may be used in statewide and national campaigns.

If you would like to participate in this quarter's photo contest (July - September), submissions should be sent to Brandon O'Connor (brandon.oconnor@usda.gov) by close of business on September 30.

General Landuse
Cindy Suseland



Conservation Planning
Conrad Stenftenagel

Wildlife
Conrad Stenftenagel



Urban/Specialty
Hannah Buckner

Conservation Practice
Andrew Pursifull



Personnel Updates

SELECTIONS FROM VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Troy Davis, Engineering Technician at Huntington CDT, effective 5-8-22.
 John Allen, State Soil Scientist at Indianapolis, effective 4-10-22.
 Adam Wymer, Engineering Technician at Greensburg CDT, effective 6-5-22.
 William Fett, Outreach Coordinator at Indianapolis, effective 5-22-22.
 Rachel Farrow, Soil Conservationist (Pathway Recent Graduate) at Greencastle CDT, effective 6-21-22.
 Regina Young, Management Analyst at Indianapolis, effective 6-5-22.
 Erika Ochoa, Administrative Support Assistant at Indianapolis SO; effective 7-17-22.
 Bryan McCutchan, District Conservationist at Charlestown; effective 8-28-22.
 Tim Graf, District Conservationist at Frankfort; effective 9-11-22.
 Laura Muntzinger, District Conservationist at Marion; effective 9-11-22.
 William Sparks, District Conservationist at New Castle; effective 8-28-22.
 Curtis Knueven, ASTC for Programs at Indianapolis SO; effective 8-28-22.

RETIREMENTS

Darrell Nicholson, Area Conservationist, effective 7/2/22.

OTHER STAFFING

Cindy Johnston, Williamsport, transfer to IL NRCS, effective 5-22-22.
 Kristi Kennedy, District Conservationist, Brazil; Resignation effective 7/9/22.
 Monica Pohlar, Soil Conservationist, Richmond; Resignation effective 7/16/22.
 Andrew Pursifull, Area Engineer, Ft Wayne; resignation effective 7/16/22
 Chris Morse, State GIS Specialist, Indianapolis; Promotion to FPAC-BC effective 8-14-22

“Handling Uncomfortable Situations” Training

Written by Gloria Montaño Greene, Deputy Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation

One of the many things that I’m proud of about our FPAC workforce is that when you see opportunities for improvement, you jump right in and take initiative to do something about it. That’s what happened when NRCS’s Allison Hammer and Jenny Templeton, both having experienced difficult interactions with customers, decided to do something to help others who might face similar circumstances. They developed a presentation called, “Handling Uncomfortable Situations,” that wound up landing them the Women in NRCS 2022 Group Award of Excellence. I’ve always believed that our front-line workers are our first and best resource for identifying and solving the challenges we face, and Allison and Jenny are just further proof of that point. Way to go! To [learn more about this training](#), visit myFPAC.

National FFA Volunteer Opportunity

The FFA National Convention and Expo will be returning to Indianapolis this year and will run from October 26-28. As in years past, NRCS will be supporting the Natural Resources and Environment Judging event and we are asking for volunteer assistance from partnership staff. This event will take place on Thursday, October 27 from 11AM-2PM at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. Judges are separated into two categories:

Verbal Judging:

Students will be provided a scenario that addresses an environmental/natural resource problem from soils, water, ecosystems and waste management. Teams are required to develop a statement that addresses the questions in the scenario and give an oral presentation justifying the decisions made by the team. Each team will have eight minutes to make their presentation. There will be an additional five minutes given to each team to address questions from the judges.

Teamwork Judging:

While the students are preparing their oral presentations, a group of judges will evaluate how well the team members work together to develop their statement and presentation.

If you would like to volunteer for one of these events, please contact Kris Vance at: kris.vance@usda.gov.