



CONSERVATION CONNECTION

The Montgomery County Soil & Water Conservation District Newsletter

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Did you Know?

- Soil & Water Conservation Districts are a governmental sub-division of state government.
- The official governing body of a district consists of five supervisors: three elected and two appointed, with staggered three-year terms.
- Elections happen in the first quarter of the year at an annual meeting; voters are county land occupiers.
- Appointments are done by the State Soil Conservation Board based upon recommendations of local leadership within the district.
- Districts are funded through a variety of sources including but not limited to county and state appropriations, grants, revenue-generating programs, private donations, and to a limited extent, reimbursable agreements for services (i.e. NRCS Contribution Agreements).

The Montgomery County SWCD is housed in the Crawfordsville USDA Service Center, but we are not a USDA-funded organization. We work alongside the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff. Our purpose is to:

- Provide information about soil, water, and related natural resource conservation
- Identify and prioritize local resource concerns
- Connect land users to sources of educational, technical, and financial assistance to implement conservation practices and technologies

We are located at 2036 East Lebanon Road in Crawfordsville, Indiana. You can reach our office and NRCS by calling 765-362-0405 extension 3. FSA can be reached by using extension 2 at the same phone number.

Hindsight's 20/20

Sina Parks, Conservation Director

A little over a year ago, if you knew then what the next 365 days had in store for you, what would you have done? For some the weeks might have been different; but for most of us, we would have continued, just as we always do. We would have remained planning for meetings...trainings...sporting events...fairs...school...the next growing season; just as we do every year. The phrase hindsight's 20/20 has a different meaning now than it did a year ago. I am not naïve enough to think it was easy for anyone or that you did not want to wave the white flag surrendering at times, but we did not. Through the continuous challenges thrown at us, we held strong. We bonded together and found new ways of doing things. While events, meetings, fairs, school and sporting events may have looked different than many of us wanted, the community got stronger and we persevered.

Who would have thought the USDA office could close to the outside world for over a year and yet we could still accomplish as much or more than in previous years? The Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Crawfordsville have worked together on how we can best serve our customers during this time. If you had told me a year ago, I was going to need, and regularly use, a home office, or the interviews I had just scheduled for our new Program Coordinator position would be postponed for months – I would have laughed. I would have gone on planning to be physically located in the office, onboarding a new employee, excited for the possibilities. I would never have thought we would postpone interviews for months, repost the position and it would take eight months before our new team member would join us, but we stuck it out and you did too! I am excited to have Kristen Latzke on board, ready to serve Montgomery County! I dream about the days I can introduce you to her; in-person, in our fully open, fully staffed building! However, until then, we will continue to make the best of the situation and find new ways of doing things and sharing information with you!

What's your hindsight's 20/20? I would challenge you to use this time to reflect on the last year; but do not dwell on what went wrong, instead focus on what went right. Embrace that and build on it, taking on the newness of spring and looking to the bright future in front of us!

If you would like to reach out to me or have general questions about the district, please email me at mcsxcd@montgomerycosxcd.com or call 765-362-0405 extension 3.





Tackling Invasive Plants

Kristen Latzke, Program Coordinator

As temperatures rise and we find a glimpse of spring, take a look at the plants as they start to green up. Do you know what species of plants are most common here in Montgomery County? Unfortunately, about 25% of the plants you see are non-native (not natural to Indiana) and some of these have become invasive. These types of plants are outcompeting native plants and are harmful to the environment (pictured above is Bush Honeysuckle, an invasive plant found here).

*"About 25% of the plants you see
are non-native."*

Why should we care if a plant is invasive or not? Invasive plants are costing us money due to the fact that they decrease soil and water quality and they have a rapid rate of growth, causing a lot of time spent keeping them under control. So what can you do? How do you know if you have invasive species on your property? Work began in 2020 to create a Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) here in Montgomery County to help answer those questions and more.

For resources on our CISMA please visit www.montgomerycoswcd.com/cisma. If you have questions about invasive plants or would like to schedule an invasive species assessment on your property please email our Program Coordinator, Kristen, at klatzke@montgomerycoswcd.com or call 765-362-0405 extension 3. There are also many ways to get involved! Let us know how you would like to be involved and your thoughts on what should be a priority for our CISMA in the county by visiting www.montgomerycoswcd.com/survey.

Get Involved While Staying Safe

Kristen Latzke, Program Coordinator

This year has been a great challenge for all of us and event planning has many new considerations lately. We strive to provide the community with resources to care for their land and to maintain soil and water health. How do we do that while navigating a pandemic? It has been difficult to say this least. We have amped up education on Facebook and Twitter (give us a follow!) and we have recently updated our website. Here we provide educational materials as well as activities to keep the conservation conversation going.

We have started planning in-person events with COVID guidelines in mind. To get outside and away from Zoom meetings join us for volunteer workdays at Bachner Nature Preserve next month. Masks and social distancing are required. Come stretch your legs and enjoy some fresh air as we work to remove invasive Garlic Mustard from the property. See below for shift information. All participants must RSVP in advance. Virtual events will also be promoted in newsletters and on our social media channels.

Another easy way to get involved with us is to submit responses to our community surveys. On our website (www.montgomerycoswcd.com/survey) you will find a new tab dedicated to surveys to gather your opinion on important topics. Gathering this data helps us to better serve you and conserve natural resources here in Montgomery County!



Upcoming events & Important Dates

- **April 1st**– Nesting Season begins for CRP
- **April 2nd**– SWCD office only closed
- **April 9th**– Quality Loss Adjustment Program application due
- **April 16th-17th**– CISMA volunteer days, Bachner Nature Preserve. Shifts are 10 am -12:45 pm & 1 pm- 4 pm. RSVP is required. Email Justin at justin@nicheslandtrust.org to request a shift.
- **April 22nd**– Earth Day
- **April 23rd**– CRP grassland offers due
- **May 31st**– SWCD, NRCS, and FSA offices closed
- **June 14th**– Nominations open for County Committee elections
- **June 22nd**– Prevented planting claims for corn due
- **July 5th**– SWCD, NRCS, and FSA offices closed
- **July 6th**– Prevented planting claims for soybeans due
- **July 15th**– Acreage reporting date for all other crops