



CONSERVATION CONNECTION

The Montgomery County Soil & Water Conservation District Newsletter

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Upper Sugar Creek Watershed Project

In November 2021 we were approved to start a \$131,000 IDEM Section 319 grant. This project will run until November 2023. We will provide quarterly updates here in our newsletter and also on the project website. Please visit this site for the most up to date information and upcoming events: www.montgomerycoswcd.com/sugarcreek

1st Quarter Update
Sara Peel, Arion Consultants

The first draft of the Upper Sugar Creek watershed management plan (WMP) was submitted to IDEM on February 16, 2022. The draft was sent to the steering committee for review concurrent with this submission and will be posted to the project website. Watershed inventory efforts began this quarter with steering committee members completing 4 of 29 targeted inventory areas. Additionally, targeted discussions with county surveyors regarding legal drains and with the Lebanon MS4 coordinator about stormwater impacts to the Upper Sugar Creek Watershed occurred this quarter.

The Quality Assurance Project Plan, or QAPP, (report required before chemical water testing can begin) was submitted to IDEM on December 13, 2021, and approved on January 7, 2022. Water chemistry monitoring occurred on January 26, 2022, and will occur monthly thereafter. Biological monitoring is scheduled to start in July 2022.

The Upper Sugar Creek steering committee met on January 19, 2022, with the goal of kicking off the project and engaging stakeholders in all aspects of the project. The first public meeting occurred on March 16, 2022 - promotion of this meeting occurred this quarter and will continue into the next quarter. The project website was created on the Montgomery County SWCD website and has been updated several times since its creation. The Montgomery County SWCD social media will be used to promote the project and has been updated eight times with information relevant to the project. The Upper Sugar Creek informational brochure has been reviewed by the steering committee and was printed this quarter. Distribution will occur in subsequent quarters. Hoosier Riverwatch training is scheduled for the next quarter.

Springtime Makes Some Invasives Easy to Spot

Oftentimes invasive species are easy to spot as they have a tendency to green up before other species both in the forest and in ornamental settings. One of the best examples of this is the Callery Pear Tree, with the most notable cultivar being the Bradford Pear. All ornamental pear trees are considered Callery pears; some cultivars include Aristocrat, Cleveland Select, Autumn Blaze, and Capital. This species is native to China, Taiwan, Japan, and Vietnam.

These trees have been widely planted in the past because they are attractive and fast-growing. With the creation of multiple cultivars, the once sterile trees now have abundant fruit. Birds eat the fruit and carry the seeds across the landscape which allows them to invade natural areas. Now the Callery pear is recognized as an invasive species that forms dense thickets, outcompetes natural plants, degrades wildlife habitat, and creates problems along roadsides.

This is why planting native plants is so vital. Native plants are beautiful and they benefit birds and other wildlife. They are able to support multiple pollinators and insects which provides food for Indiana birds. Also as they evolved in this area with other species native to the area, natives have a tendency to be more resistant to disease and insects requiring less maintenance. This means you save time and money!

A few native alternatives to the Callery Pear include Serviceberry, Flowering Dogwood, and Redbud. We have a few of these species available at our native plant sale coming up later this month. Check out the info to the right to see what species we have available and how you can plant some natives on your land.



2nd Annual Native Plant Sale!

Plant pre-sale April 11th - May 16th
Plant Pick up on May 20th from 4-7 pm at the Beef Barn at the Montgomery Co. Fairgrounds.

To learn more visit the plant sale page on our website: montgomerycoswcd.com

Species for sale

- Allegheny Serviceberry
- Redbud
- Witch Hazel
- Tulip Poplar
- Sycamore
- White Oak
- Common Milkweed
- Purple Coneflower
- Black-eyed Susan
- Butterfly Weed
- Wild Bergamot
- Prairie Blazing Star

You can order plants through our online store <https://shopmocoswcd.square.site/>, by picking up a paper form at our office, and calling 765-362-0405 ext. 121.

Upcoming Events & Important Dates

- April 7th: SWCD board meeting at 8:15 am
- April 11th: Native plant sale starts
- April 15th: Office Closed
- April 18th: 2nd Quarterly Meeting for Community Growers of Montgomery County at USDA Service Center Conference Room (open to the public) 9 - 11 am
- April 19th: Elementary Explorers with the Crawfordsville Public library 4 - 4:30 pm
- April 22nd- May 1st: DIY creek clean-up with FOSC. Grab your friends and family and help clean up Sugar Creek! Send a photo of your work to canoe@friendsofsugarcreek.org for a free T-shirt!
- April 23rd: Garlic Mustard Pull at Bacher Nature Preserve with NICHES. Shifts are 10 am-1 pm and 1 pm-4 pm. Email Sam at sam@nicheslandtrust.org to sign up.
- April 26th: Upper Sugar Creek project steering committee meeting 2pm HHSB Success Center
- April 30th: Garlic Mustard pull at Shades State Park 1-3 pm, Meet at the Hickory Shelter
- May 3rd: Office closed
- May 5th: SWCD board meeting 8:15 am
- May 16th: Native plant sale ends
- May 20th: Plant pickup- 4H fairgrounds 4-7pm
- May 30th: Office closed
- June 2nd: SWCD board meeting 8:15 am
- June 11th: Weed Wrangle Location and Time TBD
- June 18th: Nature Day at Carnegie Museum 1-4 pm

The 80th Annual Meeting

We hosted our 80th Annual Meeting on March 7th at Stone Creek Lodge! It was catered by The Juniper Spoon and we were very thankful to have Lali Hess as a keynote speaker. A special thank you to our friends at Farm Credit Mid-America for sponsoring this year's keynote.

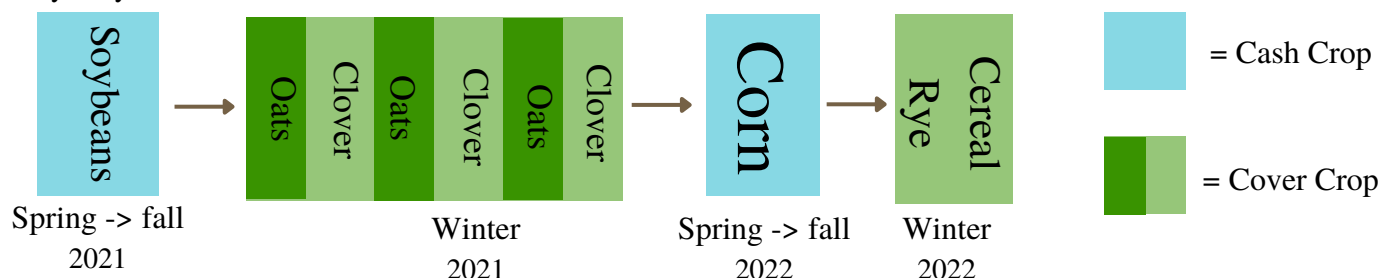
In addition to celebrating 80 years of conservation, we were able to recognize multiple community members for their outstanding work. We highlighted Jeff Lough for 24 years on the district board. We also recognized Cain's Farms Inc. as they were awarded the River-Friendly Farmer award at last year's state fair. The 2021 Conservation Farmer of the Year was awarded to Hester Brothers Farms LLC. Dave Stanley, NRCS District Conservationist (pictured right with Brian and Todd Hester) presented awards to all three. You can read more about the Hester brothers below!



The Hester Family is Committed to Conservation

Brian and Todd Hester from Hester Brothers Farms LLC new New Market were awarded the 2021 Conservation Farmer of the Year Award. The two brothers were influenced by their father, Russell Hester, who farmed before them. Russell started conservation in the mid-1980s by creating temporary critical areas seeding wheat cover on highly erosive areas. A few years later he began no-tilling soybeans into corn stalks. After seeing success of no-till beans, three years later they started no-tilling corn into soybean stubble. They had to adapt their CaseIH 900 cyclo air-planter for starter fertilizer and no-till accessories in order to plant no-till corn. Starting in the 90s along with their 100% no-till operation they started experimenting with side dressing nitrogen and feeding the plants when they need nitrogen instead of using pre-plant nitrogen. The Hester brothers learned that higher rates of nitrogen in starter fertilizer along with planting when conditions are dry and warm made for successful no-till corn. Once the no-till system became prosperous it allowed them to get their own sprayer and GPS technology to help improve weed control and spraying conditions.

In the past few years, the Hester brothers have been experimenting with increased soil health practices. Along with their no-till system they are planting cereal rye into corn stalks to use as a cover crop. In the Spring, they plant soybeans into the green cereal rye and use it to mulch the beans. They are also experimenting with interseeding corn in 15 inch rows in a clover cover crop. The corn is planted once the oats are winterkilled. This clover will produce nitrogen for the growing corn crop next year. Thank you to the Hester family for your commitment to conversation.



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www.montgomerycountyswcd.com/subscribe

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Get to Know Us!

During our annual meeting we shared a video introducing the staff and board members of the district. Here we will share a little bit about us in case you missed the meeting!

Kristen Latzke

Conservation Director



Kristen is originally from South Bend, Indiana. She attended Purdue and received a bachelor's degree in Animal Science from the College of Agriculture. She spent a few years focused on wildlife conservation before coming to the district to focus on natural resource conservation. Her favorite part of her job is the grant work, especially when she can be out in the field. She lives on the Northwest side of Indianapolis with her husband, daughter, and two dogs.

Marc Roberts

Board Chair



Marc lives East of Mace with his wife and 4 kids. He sells seed, has a small agronomics projects business, and farms with his father-in law. Some of the conservation practices that he's used include CRP for grassed waterways, CSP primarily for cover crops, and EQIP for heavy use areas, timber stand improvement, and currently is working on an EQIP fencing project.