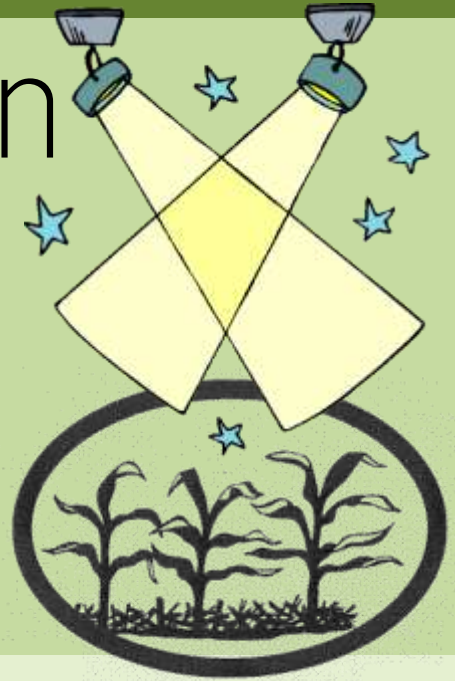


The Conservation Spotlight

A Supplement to the
St. Joseph County SWCD's
Quarterly Newsletter:
The Conservation Kaleidoscope

Issue 1.5, August 2010



OUR MISSION
*To provide guidance
and education to the
youth and adults of
St. Joseph County
and to administer
programs
to preserve,
protect and improve
soil, water, air, plant,
and animal
resources
for future
generations.*

Hello, Producers!

Did we see you at our recent Cover Crop Workshop on August 12th? If not, perhaps we will see you next spring for our producers meeting. We are tentatively planning on holding our 2011 spring meeting as a **Cover Crop Field Day**, and we're thinking of holding it sometime in April.

In this edition of The Conservation Spotlight, you can read about the current general sign-up for the **Farm Service Agency's (FSA's)** Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The deadline to sign up for CRP is Friday, August 27, 2010, so if you are wondering whether this program is right for you, turn to page 2 right now to learn more. On page 3, you can also read a message from Morgan Thornburg, the **FSA County Executive Director for St. Joseph County**. If you haven't met **Morgan since she began her position in 2008** or if you haven't visited our office in a while, come on down to the **St. Joseph County USDA Service Center and see what's new!**

St. Joseph County Soil & Water
Conservation District
USDA Service Center
5605 US 31 South, Ste 4
South Bend IN 46614
Phone: 574-291-7444, ext. 3
www.stjoseph.iaswcd.org

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SPOTLIGHT on Conservation Reserve Program General Sign-up

1. CRP Sign-Up from August 2, 2010 to August 27, 2010

On July 28, 2010, Julia A. Wickard, Executive Director for USDA's Farm Service Agency in Indiana announced that a general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will begin on August 2, 2010 and continue through August 27, 2010. During the sign-up period, farmers and ranchers may offer eligible land for CRP's competitive general sign-up at their county Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. The 2008 Farm Bill authorized USDA to maintain CRP enrollment up to 32 million acres.

"We are excited to offer Hoosier producers the opportunity to enroll their land into the nation's largest conservation program. CRP allows landowners to place acreage into a program that provides benefits to wildlife habitat, water quality and to our state's ecosystem," said Wickard.

CRP is a voluntary program that assists farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers to use their environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. Producers enrolling in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers in exchange for rental payments, cost-share, and technical assistance.

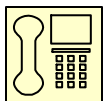
CRP protects millions of acres of America's topsoil from erosion and is designed to improve the nation's natural resources base. Participants voluntarily remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production by entering into long-term contracts for 10 to 15 years. In exchange, participants receive annual rental payments and a payment of up to 50% of the cost of establishing conservation practices.

By reducing water runoff and sedimentation, CRP also protects groundwater and helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds and streams. Acreage enrolled in the CRP is planted to resource-conserving vegetative covers, making the program a major contributor to wildlife population increases in many parts of the country. As a result, CRP has provided significant opportunities for hunting and fishing on private lands.

Land currently not enrolled in CRP may be offered in this sign-up provided all eligibility requirements are met. Additionally, current CRP participants with contracts expiring this fall covering about 4.5 million acres may make new contract offers. Contracts awarded under this sign-up are scheduled to become effective Oct. 1, 2010.

FSA implements CRP on behalf of Commodity Credit Corporation. FSA will evaluate and rank eligible CRP offers using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) for environmental benefits to be gained from enrolling the land in CRP. The EBI consists of five environmental factors (wildlife, water, soil, air and enduring benefits) and cost. Decisions on the EBI cutoff will be made after the sign-up ends and after analyzing the EBI data of all the offers.

Those who would have met previous sign-up EBI thresholds are not guaranteed a contract under this sign-up. In addition to the general sign-up, CRP's continuous sign-up program will be ongoing. Continuous acres represent the most environmentally desirable and sensitive land.



For more information, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp or contact the Farm Service Agency at your local USDA Service Center in St. Joseph County at 574-291-7444 x 2.

The CRP program is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and technical support for CRP is provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In St. Joseph County, the FSA, NRCS, and the St. Joseph County SWCD are all located within the St. Joseph County USDA Service Center, and we all make up the St. Joseph County Soil & Water Partnership.

SPOTLIGHT on Conservation Reserve Program General Sign-up, *cont.*

II. A Word from one of our Partners in Conservation ...*

St. Joseph County Farm Service Agency's
County Executive Director, Morgan Thornburg

Greetings St. Joseph County!

As I begin my third year on the job this fall, I can honestly say I am very lucky to have gotten this job in St. Joseph County. My first two years on the job have been eventful and exciting. When I started, we were implementing a new Farm Bill that allowed me to get to know many of the farmers in St. Joseph County early on while helping decipher the many new programs available to them.

With harvest just around the corner, there are several programs we are still working on at this point in which you may be interested.

General CRP Signup- After reading the previous page, please contact us if you think you may be interested in this program.

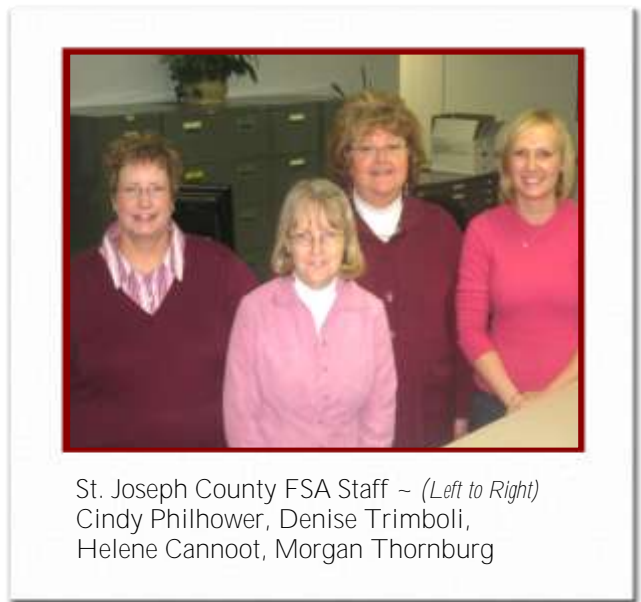
Continuous CRP Signup- This is our ongoing conservation program. Please contact us with questions if you are interested.

SURE (Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program)- This is the new disaster program. We are accepting applications now for 2008. Since St. Joseph County was declared a disaster county by the Secretary of Agriculture for 2008, you would trigger for a payment if you suffered a 10% production loss on one crop of economic significance. To qualify, you must have crop insurance or NAP (Non-Insured Assistance Program) on all crops in all counties. Call us if you would like to apply @ 574-291-7444 ext. 2. The deadline to apply for 2008 is September 30, 2010.

These are just a few of the programs we administer through our office. Don't hesitate to call with any questions if we can be of service. Thank you and I look forward to sharing another harvest season with you.

* The Farm Service Agency and the 92 Soil & Water Conservation Districts in Indiana are among the 8 agencies and organizations that have formally partnered to comprise the "Indiana Conservation Partnership." The mission of the Indiana Conservation Partnership is to provide technical, financial and educational assistance needed to implement economically and environmentally compatible land and water stewardship decisions, practices and technologies. By working collectively and sharing resources, the members of the Indiana Conservation Partnership work to best serve our common customers, the landowners of Indiana, and protect and improve Indiana's natural resources.

For more information about the Indiana Conservation Partnership, visit our website via this shortcut:
<http://tinyurl.com/indiana-icp>



St. Joseph County FSA Staff ~ (Left to Right)
 Cindy Philhower, Denise Trimboli,
 Helene Cannoot, Morgan Thornburg



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South Bend IN 46614

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Farm Service Agency Staff

Morgan Thornburg, CED
Helene Cannoot
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FSA Office Phone:
574-291-7444 ext. 2

Dates to Jot Down

- Thurs Aug 19 and Wed Aug 25 ~ Purdue Ag Ctr Field Days
Various Purdue Univ. Ag Centers will host field days for producers and others to visit the facilities and learn from campus-based staff. Free and open to the public. For info:
Aug. 19 - Northeast-Purdue Ag Center, Columbia City.
Contact: Phil Walker, 260.244.7290
Aug. 25 - Pinney-Purdue Ag Center, Wanatah.
Contact: Jon Leuck, 219.733.2379
- Tues Aug 24 ~ Soil Productivity Field Day ~ West Lafayette
~ 8:30AM to 3:00PM
Topics: reduced tillage, no-till and improving soil quality.
Free, but must pre-register by calling the Clinton County SWCD at 765.659.1223, ext. 3. PARP credits available for \$10 fee.
- Mon Sept 13 ~ Kosciusko County Cover Crop Field Day ~ 4:00PM to Dusk @ JA Scott Farms in Pierceton, IN.
Free, but pre-registration required by calling the Kosciusko County SWCD at 574.267.7445, ext. 3
- Tues Sept 21 ~ Three-County Forestry Field Day ~ Dean Morehouse Farm, New Paris ~ 5:30 - 8:30PM
Offering 3 Distinct and Exciting Tracks: 1. Maple Syrup, 2. Backyard Conservation, 3. Traditional Forest Management. To Reserve your SPOT or for more details, call the St. Joseph County SWCD at 574.291.7444, ext. 3 and check out our website at www.stjoseph.iaswcd.org