

## Jennings County SWCD Successful On Two Grant Applications

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), through the State Soil Conservation Board, has announced that the Jennings County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), in cooperation with nearby counties, has received approval for two grants to promote soil and water conservation practices with local landowners. ISDA administers the Clean Water Indiana (CWI) grants which are available to SWCDs and emphasize practices that contribute to improving water quality in Indiana's lakes and rivers.

For 2012, the ISDA had about \$830,000 available for the CWI grants and there were over \$1.5 million requested by SWCDs around the state. Proposed project applications had to be watershed-based with emphasis given to multi-county projects. Each of the grants received by Jennings County SWCD and partnering counties is for \$60,000 to be allocated for a three year period.

Jennings County SWCD cooperated to submit two applications, both of which were successful. One grant was submitted with Decatur and Bartholomew Counties and includes the Sand Creek Watershed in Jennings and part of Decatur County and parts of Flat Rock and Haw Creek in Bartholomew County. This is an area that was previously approved for special federal funding through the Mississippi River Basin Initiative. In this area, farmers are eligible to be paid \$20 per acre for applying a combination of nutrient management, no-till, cover crops, and buffers, if needed, on the same fields.

The other grant is for the Muscatatuck Watershed and covers that part of Jennings County outside of Sand Creek Watershed, as well as parts of Jackson, Scott, and Jefferson County. This grant is set up to promote buffer practices. Incentive payments will be made for the following conservation practices: \$400 per acre for hardwood tree planting, riparian buffers and bottomland timber planting; \$100 per acre for native grass planting, wildlife habitat planting (warm season grasses and shrubs) and filter strip. The incentive program will be similar to Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program which is available in Sand Creek Watershed. These incentives will be available to landowners applying these practices through the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as well as those applying the practices without program assistance.

Anyone interested in these grants should contact the SWCD office to get more information and begin the planning process for the practices involved. For more information, call the office at 812-346-3411 X3.

## *Mississippi River Basin Initiative Funds Available in Sand Creek Watershed*

**The Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) goal is to improve the health of the Mississippi River Basin including water quality, wetland restoration and wildlife habitat. Indiana is one of twelve states selected to receive additional federal farm bill funds for the next four years. This initiative will help producers implement on-the-ground practices that avoid, control, and trap nutrient and sediment runoff as well as improve wildlife habitat, and maintain agricultural productivity.**

**Six watersheds in Indiana were targeted for proposals. The Upper East Fork of the White River Watershed's proposal was one accepted for approval in the state. This area has funds available for owners and operators as long as 50% of their enrolled acres are located in the selected sub-watersheds.**

**The Upper East Fork of White River MRBI area includes the Sand Creek Watershed in Jennings County and parts of Decatur and Bartholomew Counties. In these areas, special funds have been set aside from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The funding level includes \$415,800 of EQIP funds and \$97,500 of CSP funds which will be allocated over the next five years.**

**On-the-ground practices will include cover crops, guided stalk sampling, and nutrient management. Cover crops will include costs associated with planting cover crops, guided stalk sampling will be an enhancement payment to conduct the practice, and nutrient management planning will be at the high level management tier. Funding will provide \$31 per acre for cover crops, \$22 per acre for nutrient management plans, \$500 per field for guided stalk sampling. To enroll you must meet the minimum requirements for EQIP.**

**Funding deadlines for fiscal year 2011 will consist of three ranking periods throughout 2011. The first deadline is February 25, 2011 with two ranking deadlines following in the calendar year. Call your local SWCD office for more details.**

## **CREP Available in Sand Creek Watershed**

Indiana recently expanded its Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). What is CREP? CREP is one of Indiana's most sought after conservation programs. A joint partnership between the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), CREP offers lucrative financial incentives for agricultural landowners to enhance sensitive or difficult to farm areas. Previously, CREP was only available in 3 watersheds; with the recent expansion, CREP is now available in 11 watersheds and 65 counties. ISDA and FSA will be working closely with all organizations in the Indiana Conservation Partnership to ensure excellent planning and implementation assistance is available to landowners. The recent expansion includes the Upper East Fork of White River Watershed which includes the Sand Creek Watershed in Jennings County.

Not only are the financial incentives rewarding to landowners, but landowners can also take pride in knowing they are playing a role in protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife. Practices such as filterstrips, stream buffers, native grasses, tree plantings and wetland restoration are all available through the CREP program. Strategic planning and location of these types of practices can improve the overall function of a working farm. The use of conservation practices can also help prepare your farm for a greater rating for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

The financial benefits are better than ever for landowners. Included as a financial incentive is a one-time state payment for CREP practices that range from \$100 to \$950 per acre, depending on the practice. CREP also offers increased funding for conservation projects over continuous CRP. With a 40% premium paid beyond the soil rental rates (SRR) plus the state incentives, CREP can add up to very attractive yearly income on acreages enrolled. For landowners that receive straight rental payments on their farmland, the monetary advantage is very competitive with most rental rates.

## **SWCD is Selling Rain Barrels, Composters**

Collecting rain water for plants or gardens is easy with a rain barrel and the SWCD is selling high quality rain barrels made by Upcycle Products. In addition to the barrels, we will have all fittings needed to hook up the barrels under various conditions. These barrels are 55 gallon plastic that were previously used for food products. A new item is an oak wooden barrel with a brass faucet. Examples of the barrels can be seen at the Upcycle web site, <http://www.upcycle-products.com>.

In addition, we will have tumbling composters made by the same company. These will be in two sizes, a regular 55 gallon size and a mini 5 gallon composter. These can also be seen on the Upcycle web site. We have a price list and more information available at [http://www.jenningswcd.org/rain\\_barrel\\_composter.pdf](http://www.jenningswcd.org/rain_barrel_composter.pdf).

We have some of these on display in our office, so stop in to see them and discuss pricing of these items. We will also be cooperating with the Jennings County Master Gardeners in the sale of these.

## **2010 Jennings County Plat Books Now Available**

We have the 2010 version of the Jennings County Plat books. These books are the nicest ones we have had and include color aerial photos of each township in addition to the usual plat maps.

You can get these books at our office at 2600 N State Highway 7 just north of North Vernon or call us at 812-346-3411 X3 to arrange to have one mailed to you.

## **SWCD Cost-Share for Soil Sampling, Grid Sampling**

**The SWCD Board of Supervisors has decided to continue its cost share program for assisting farmers with soil sampling on crop or pasture land with an emphasis on grid sampling cropland. Those who are doing grid sampling for the first time are eligible to receive \$5.00 per acre, up to a maximum of \$750.00 per producer. For those who have done grid sampling in the past, cost-share of \$4.00 per acre is available with a maximum payment of \$500.00.**

**Farmers may bring in bills from fertilizer retailers and collect the cost-share.**

**Conventional soil samples for crop or pasture land will continue to be cost-shared at \$4.00 per sample. Bills from fertilizer vendors may be submitted or samples can be brought to the SWCD office for submission to A&L Great Lakes Lab.**

**For more information, call the SWCD office at 812-346-3411 X3.**

## **SWCD Cost-Share for Hay Testing**

**The value of hay for livestock feed is determined by its nutrient value. Whether you are feeding hay to your livestock, selling hay, or buying hay, it is important to know how much feed value is in your hay.**

**To encourage more testing, the SWCD will cost-share with farmers to have their hay tested. The testing will be done in cooperation with Schneider Feed and Seed of North Vernon. Tom Schneider, owner of the company, is providing testing of hay (wet or dry hay) and silage at his cost. The basic test costs \$13.75. To get reimbursed, farmers may bring their receipt from Schneider Feed and Seed to the SWCD office and get reimbursed in the amount of \$6.00 per sample. In order to help with the testing, Schneider will loan equipment to take samples from hay bales.**

**In the future, the SWCD will provide more information on ways to improve nutrient values of hay crops, but it all starts with testing to find out where you are now. For more information, call the SWCD office or Schneider Feed and Seed at 812-346-3760.**

# **Soil Testing Available Through SWCD**

**The Soil and Water Conservation District has made arrangements with A & L Great Lakes Lab at Fort Wayne to accept soil samples for nutrient testing. Landowners may bring samples to the SWCD office, where they will be forwarded to the lab. Test results and fertilizer recommendations will be sent back to the SWCD for review with landowners.**

**Soil nutrient recommendations are available for most crops, pasture and hay, lawn and garden and other uses. Test results are stored at the SWCD office and can be accessed later if more information is needed or cropping practices change on the tested fields.**

**For more information, contact the SWCD by calling 812-346-3411 X3.**

## **SWCD Equipment For Rent**

**The SWCD has a Great Plains model 1006NT drill which is available for rent. This drill is equipped to plant conventional seeds as well as native grass seeds and clover seeds. It is 10 feet wide and will rent for \$8.00 per acre with a minimum of \$75.00. This is the only drill which the SWCD will have available this year.**

**In addition, the SWCD has a Frontier Plotmaster which can be used for planting wildlife food plots. This machine is sold by John Deere and can be pulled by a small tractor or a heavy ATV. It is 4 ft. wide and will be transported using a trailer supplied by the SWCD. Rental fee for the Plotmaster is \$50.00 for a 24 hour period.**

**Also available is a Brillion seeder which does an excellent job of planting grasses and/or legumes in a prepared seedbed. This seeder is 10 ft. in width and rents for \$8 per acre.**

## **Controlling Kudzu in Jennings County**

If you have traveled in the southeastern United States, you have probably seen kudzu, a vining plant that overtops trees, utility poles, and anything else that gets in its way. This plant is not common in Indiana but there are areas where it grows and it is invasive because it will spread, especially in wooded areas. Jennings County is on the northernmost edge of the range for this plant and there are presently more than ten known places where it is growing in the county.

In addition to its invasive nature, it is a host plant for soybean rust, a disease of soybeans. This makes two good reasons for getting rid of the plants.

The Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) board is working with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to help locate and eradicate the pest. Since we are on the northern edge of the range, it is important to stop it here so it does not spread farther. At this time IDNR has funds to pay for the cost of herbicides to eliminate kudzu. The SWCD will work with landowners to help re-seed the areas if that is needed after getting rid of the kudzu. At present there are ten known locations where kudzu grows in Jennings County

Anyone who knows where kudzu is growing in the county should contact the SWCD as soon as possible. We will assist with positive identification and get in touch with IDNR specialists to assist with eradication of the plants. To see more information and learn to identify the plants, there are several web sites where you can learn more. One good one is:  
<http://www.in.gov/dnr/entomolo/pdfs/kudzufactsheet.pdf>.

## **NRCS LAUNCHES LATEST VERSION OF WEB SOIL SURVEY**

**The Natural Resource Conservation Service recently released the latest version of its Web Soil Survey 2.1. Originally launched in August 2005, the free, web-based program provides a variety of information on soils, including soil maps, properties and interpretations aimed at helping visitors with land use decisions.**

**The latest version includes a number of enhancements and improvements, including a new “search” feature, the capability to download raw soil data clipped to the geographic extent of the defined area of interest, the ability to print soil and interpretive maps on multiple pages, a new distance-measuring tool, and more. Additional enhancements are planned for future releases.**

**According to NRCS: “Soil surveys provide critical information for land use decisions, both on the farm and in the city. Whether a developer is looking to build on or purchase land, or a farmer is considering alternative crops, soil survey data is a critical element in the equation that produces profits. This is essential to rural America and the need for producers and ranchers to maximize productivity without harming natural resources.”**

**To access the survey, visit [www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov) If you need assistance using this web-based program, you may contact the local Soil and Water Conservation District.**