

## **Jennings County SWCD Receives Two Grants to Assist Farmers**

The Jennings County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) recently received notice that it will be receiving two grants to help in a statewide effort to reduce sediment and nutrient runoff in local streams. The grants total \$12,000 and come from Clean Water Indiana funds which are administered by the State Soil Conservation Board of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture.

The first grant will provide \$2,000 for the SWCD to promote pasture and livestock management practices. Plans are being made to host field days for farmers which will include a workshop for goat owners similar to the one which drew about 90 people last summer. Another field day will be held which will be more useful for cattle producers and will emphasize pasture and livestock management. The SWCD will also provide technical assistance to landowners for planning and installing practices related to improved livestock management and pasture improvement.

A second grant in the amount of \$10,000 will be used to address sediment and nutrient reduction by soil testing of cropland and pastures in the county. Soil testing to determine nutrient needs provides one of the best ways for farmers to ensure that their fertilizer dollars are providing the best return on their investment. Testing can also reduce application of excessive fertilizers which can lead to more nutrient runoff associated with soil erosion.

The SWCD will promote soil testing by providing technical assistance to help those who may have questions about proper methods of sampling and testing soils. Assistance will also be provided for interpreting soil test results. The SWCD will also use some of the funds to provide financial incentives to farmers doing soil testing. Farmers who are already doing soil testing on a field basis will be encouraged to utilize grid sampling methods which provide more detailed analysis and can be used for variable rate spreading of fertilizer which often leads to greater savings of fertilizer.

Discussion has been held with representatives of the Jackson-Jennings CO-OP, Kova, and Crop Production Services and they have pledged their support and, in some cases, may provide discounts on soil testing for farmers participating with the SWCD. Don Biehle, superintendent at Purdue's Southeast Purdue Agricultural Center, has also agreed to provide assistance with promoting the program and interpreting soil test results.

According to Dan Megel, SWCD chairman, "By encouraging more extensive use of soil tests, the SWCD hopes to show farmers how they can stretch their fertilizer dollars and, at the same time, help improve water quality by reducing nutrient losses that occur with soil erosion." For more information, contact the SWCD by calling 812-346-3411 X3 or visit them at the USDA Service Center in North Vernon.

# 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 four 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.

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>.

## 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 will be sent back to the SWCD for review with landowners.

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