



Jennings County Soil & Water Conservation District
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Fall Edition Newsletter September 2012

Local Farmers Reaping the Benefits of Cover Crops

If you are searching for ways to offset drought symptoms in the future, you may want to consider using cover crops in your production. In addition to increasing the organic matter in your soil, cover crops have been known to help soil hold on to moisture longer, giving your corn and soybeans a much needed boost in years of insufficient rainfall. Cereal rye and wheat can also assist in weed suppression because thick stands will shade the ground helping to prevent weed germination and growth, thereby diminishing a threat to your yields.

Bill Beesley had planted rye several years ago. He found that there weren't any new weed threats in that field for 3-5 years. Bill also saw the difference in yields in that field for almost 10 years.

When planting cover crops, producers in this area have several options available to them. Broadcast spreading the seed while applying fertilizer has been known to work well when combined with a light incorporation to provide good seed to soil contact. Ideally drilling the cover crop into bean stubble is the best way to insure a good stand. When you are trying to establish a cover crop in corn, flying it on the field while the corn is still standing works best.

Tom Gasper, of Gasper Farms, has been using cover crops for a few years. They have used wheat and rye for some of their cover crops. Tom felt that the cover crops were very beneficial this year with the drought. "Crops that were planted into cover crops held on for a couple weeks longer than those crops that didn't have the cover crops" said Gasper. "We definitely are seeing the benefits of cover crops and will continue using them in our operation" Tom said.

Tom Gasper is just one of many producers here in Jennings County that are not only improving their yields with cover crops, but are improving their soil health. With an early harvest, this year is perfect for getting a cover crop on your field to hold on to any nitrogen remaining in the ground, build your soil and cover it with vegetation to protect it from erosion. Many options are available and you can contact our office for more information.

Have you covered your soil for the winter yet??

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

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In an effort to save money and natural resources the SWCD would like to update our newsletter database and move to sending out correspondence via email. So if you would like to receive information via email please send your email address to info@jenningswcd.org. Or if you no longer wish to receive our newsletters or other information please notify our office and we will remove your information from our database.

Thank You for your help.

Jennings County SWCD Equipment / Product Rentals & Sales

Flags	25 for \$ 3.00
Plat Books	\$ 25.00
Geo-Textile Fabric	\$2/lineal ft. \$ 600/300ft. Roll
No-Till Drill	\$8/acre (min. \$75)
Brillion Seeder	\$8/acre (min. \$25)
Plotmaster	\$50/day
Strawblower	(call 346-5544)

Water Testing Available

What's in your Water?

Stop by the office and pick up your water testing kit for:
 Drinking Water \$25—\$50 depending on testing options
 Swimming Pools \$ 25
 Waster Water \$ 25

More information is available at the Jennings Co. SWCD



**Oak Rain Barrel—\$165 refinished
\$150 unfinished**

**Rain Barrel (55 gallons) \$ 75 each
(Black, Grey, Blue, Terra Cotta)**

Tumbling Composter—\$140



A New Face in the Office

If you find yourself strolling into the Jennings County Conservation Office sometime between 8:30 and 11:15 a.m. you may run into me, Amy Burbrink, the 2012-2013 school year intern for Jennings County SWCD. I am a senior at Jennings County High School, and through the school's professional internship program I will be spending every other morning working in the SWCD office. I am hoping this experience will help me gain a better understanding of various government services and programs while expanding my knowledge of natural resource conservation. I am an active member of Jennings County 4-H, Jr. Leaders, and FFA, and next fall I plan to attend Purdue University to study plant and soil sciences. I look forward to working with everyone involved in the Jennings County Soil and Water Conservation District this year, and I hope to see you soon.



Cover Crops Do More Than Conserve Water During Drought

By Justin Fruechte,

Forage & Cover Crop Specialist, Millborn Seeds

When we're in a drought, farmers don't think about planting cover crops, but they should consider it, says Kris Nichols, research soil microbiologist with the USDA Agriculture Research Service, Mandan, N.D.

"Cover crops can be an important part of keeping moisture in the soil because they keep that soil covered," Nichols said.

Below the soil's surface, Nichols says cover crops play a vital role in soil and plant health.

"A green and growing cover feeds a whole web of soil organisms – much more than crop residue," Nichols says.

She explains that most soil organisms are carbon-limited, making them dependent on plant material either directly or indirectly to obtain carbon.

"In order to get that carbon, they have to trade something to the plant. Many times they are trading nutrients which they acquire from the soil, and in some cases, they also trade water," she says.

She uses the function of mycorrhizal fungi as an example.

"Mycorrhizae are a key group of organisms which are made up of fine threads and filaments called hyphae. Because these threads are so much smaller than plant roots, they have access to more soil and the nutrients or water it contains," Nichols says.

For farmers who have been using cover crops for a few years and have built up their soil ecology, she says these same organisms will help reduce the amount of stress their plants succumb to during a drought.

"Many times during a drought, plants are not as much water stressed as they are nutrient stressed," she explains. "The way plants get nutrients from the soil to their roots is through water. In times of drought, plants will sometimes give off their own water supply to create a water film around the roots so nutrients can travel."

She explains that plants growing in soils rich with mycorrhizae can take advantage of the fungi to help them obtain nutrients from the soil.

"The fungi can do this using much less water," she said.

Nichols adds that soil rich with living organisms has a soil structure more conducive to water retention.

"Organisms help form soil aggregates, which allow for better water absorption because there is more pore space between the soil for water as well as gas exchange," she said.

Can I plant cover crops during a drought?

Maintaining a soil ecology that promotes vigorous and sustainable crop production depends heavily on plant diversity. They are the most important factor in determining the biological diversity of the soil and the microorganisms in the soil and each plant introduced to the soil supports a host of unique bacterium, insects, and organisms.

To increase the overall beneficial soil organisms, I recommend implementing a diverse cover crop mixture. Although the state is in a drought, cover crops can still grow. Most species are very fine seeds and require little moisture to germinate. When planting into dry soil be sure to close the furrow tightly and that seed will wait for moisture.



Southeastern Indiana Recycling District

"Your Partner in Protecting the Earth"

Jennings Co. Recycling & Reuse Center

4800 State Road #3 • North Vernon

Accepts

- Clear, Brown, Green Glass • Motor Oil & Filters
- Newspapers/Magazines
- Aluminum/Steel Cans
- Cardboard/Paperboard
- Mixed Paper
- Plastics #1-#7
- Electronics
- Reusable Items
- And More!



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• Recycling Center Hours •

Mon., Wed., Fri. 8am-6pm & Sat. 8am-4pm

• Reuse Center Hours •

Mon., Wed., Fri. 1pm-6pm & Sat. 11am-3pm

812-352-0800 • siswd.com

SEIRD

About Us

The Southeastern Indiana Recycling District (SEIRD) has replaced Southeastern Indiana Solid Waste District (SISWD) as our new name! This change better describes the services provided to residents throughout our district. SEIRD is, however, your place for reuse centers, household and pharmaceutical waste disposal, environmental education, and disaster debris management.



Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)

SEIRD offers FREE quarterly Household Hazardous Waste collection at the Jennings Co. Recycling and Reuse Center. Household and garden chemicals, automotive products, oil-based paints and stains (no latex), and other hard to dispose of chemicals are accepted. All liquid, powder, and crystalized products must have original labels attached. For a complete list of accepted items, log on to siswd.com. Upcoming HHW day for Jennings Co. is:

Sat., Oct. 20, 2012 -8-10am

Pharmaceutical Waste Disposal

Jennings Co. residents can dispose of unwanted and out-of-date controlled and non-controlled medications at the Jennings County Sheriff's office—twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. A disposal box is available inside the sheriff's office located at **925 S. State Street in North Vernon**. There is no charge for this service.

"Your Partner in Protecting the Earth!"

FREE COMMUNITY ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

**An OnCorp Event hosted by Jennings Co.
4-H Junior Leaders**



RCA

**November 17
9 am to 2 pm**

**Located at:
Jennings County Fairgrounds
4920 N St Hwy 3
North Vernon IN**

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Acceptable items: computers, monitors, printers, laptops, TVs, cell phones, stereo, household white goods, equipment, microwaves, and more!
Charge for: Projection and Wood console TV's \$30. Wood speakers per pr \$10.
Broke or bare glass on CRTs \$10. A **\$25.00 charge** on freon units ie. Freezers
Air conditioners, Dehumidifiers, Refrierators

CANNOT ACCEPT: biohazards, hazardous waste, liquids, fluorescent bulbs, smoke detectors, or radioactive materials, etc.

***Data Cleansing Service@ \$10 for per drive**

Department of Defense approved hard drive cleansing



For more information visit:
www.5Rprocessors.com @
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**Jennings County SWCD
2600 N. State Hwy 7
North Vernon, IN 47265**

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YOUR JENNINGS COUNTY CONSERVATION TEAM

SWCD Staff

*Robert Steiner, Executive Director
Kelly Kent, Administrative Assistant
Denise Dailey, Rule 5 Consultant*

NRCS STAFF

Jenny Vogel, District Conservationist

SWCD Supervisors

*Brad Ponsler, Chairman
Dan Megel, Vice-Chairman
Jerry St. John
Brian Belding
Nathan Burbrink
Associate Supervisor
Don Biehle
Rob McGriff*

Calendar of Events

**Sept. 25, 2012 Board Meeting 7pm @
USDA Service Center
Oct. 23, 2012 Board Meeting 7pm @
USDA Service Center
Nov. 17, 2012 4-H Junior Leader Recycling
Day @ Fairgrounds
Nov. 20, 2012 Board Meeting 7pm @
USDA Service Center
Check out our website for added events**

*Jennings County Soil and Water
Conservation District
Office Hours
Monday—Friday
8:00 am until 4:00 pm
Phone (812) 346-3411 ext 3
Fax (812) 346-4237
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Email info@jenningsswcd.org*