

Connecting With Conservation



Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District • 1931 S Liberty Drive • Bloomington IN 47403 • 812-349-2046 • www.monroe.iaswcd.org

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Our Mission

To provide information about soil, water and related natural resource conservation; identify and prioritize local soil and water resource concerns; and connect land users to sources of education, technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices and technologies.

Board of Supervisors

- Dallas Condor
- Keith McConnell
- Larry McConnell
- Ben Stidd
- Robert Woodling, II; Chair

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- Jason Clark
- Dan Derheimer
- Todd Litten
- Scott McDonald
- Kip Myers
- Joe Peden
- Kurt Petry

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NRCS Staff

Brooke Rieman, Dist. Conservationist

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Clint Deck

2008 District Highlights and Annual Report

It is a cold day in February and outside the windows of the Bloomington USDA Service Center, the sun is shining giving the illusion of warmth. Today is like all other days in the office, I begin my daily routine by starting the computer and then checking voice and emails. On the "to do" list is to begin writing the Annual Report for 2008. Looking back over my calendar for the past 365 days I come to the realization that this year's report is different, and that I must look at more than just the past year.

I have been with the Soil & Water Conservation District for just over five years and each year has been amazing and taught me how to be a better SWCD employee. I must begin with a simple yet heartfelt "thank you" to the board of supervisors that hired me; Kip Meyers, Keith McConnell, Todd Litten, Les Carmichael and Jason Clark. Gentlemen, I hope I have exceeded your expectations.

Soil & Water Conservation Districts in the state of Indiana have seen many changes since I began in September 2003, and Monroe County SWCD is no exception. When I began we had technical staff that assisted the district in servicing you, our landowners. That staff was state funded and they were dismissed in July of 2005. I quickly began to learn, out of necessity, about the process of installing best management practices on the land. The State Support Staff worked under three different agencies in the course of one year and Monroe County SWCD has had four different individuals as our State Support Staff since I began. This has not been a negative, this in fact has been a positive causing me to research and know about district law and legal deadlines.

Our federal partner in conservation, NRCS, has seen its fair share of changes as well. Financial concerns are occurring at all levels. The district had been fortunate having office space provided free of charge for many years. But with the ever changing times districts are now sub-leasing and paying for their office space in the USDA Service Centers from NRCS. This has had some negative overtones, but as with any situation if you look you can find the bright spot. Because of this change Districts are now beginning to be recognized as the independent entities that they are. When I began the NRCS District Conservationist was Tony Branum. Tony transferred to Morgan and Johnson Counties in the fall of 2007. I learned many things from Tony about the agency's weaknesses and strengths. Tony's transfer brought a vacancy that was filled by Brook Rieman, our current District Conservationist. Brook is a great asset to NRCS locally and she has helped me grow both personally and professionally. I am looking forward to working with Brook for many for years, as we work together to make Monroe County "green" with Conservation.

Since beginning my journey with Monroe Co. SWCD I have been privileged to be trained in Hoosier River Watch as an instructor, Purdue Grant Writing Workshop, How to Develop A Beneficial Mid-West Field Day, Project Learning Tree as a facilitator trainer and have completed the Purdue Watershed Leadership Academy.

As for 2008 it was a great year! The district has provided education to approximately 2700 elementary to high school aged students. Through Ag Day at Eastern Greene, Children's Farm Festival and Leonard Springs Nature Days, we reached 2400 of the 2700. A special educational opportunity was to present at the Owen Co SWCD / Owen Valley Middle School Nature Bowl. A total of 80 middle school students in teams of 5-6 spent a total of 50 minutes learning all they could about storm water and water quality. A new educational outreach was a Home School workshop held at McCormick's Creek State Park. This program was developed, marketed and executed in partnership with Hoosier Heartland RC&D Education Committee. A day of events and outdoor education was provided for families. All families participated together in the Forestry, Water and Soil sessions and the Nature Hike. The reviews and comments were outstanding and this event will be repeated in the future.

Local media attention was given to the district through an opportunity to do an on-line or "live chat" at the Herald Times On Line regarding water quality and education. Two different radio interviews were also done on AM 1370 in regard to conservation press releases sent out from the State Soil Conservation Board.

The District partnered with IFWO to host a Forestry Field Day at Robert Woodling's property "The Good-Woodling Woods" a 3 hour walk of the woods provided participants the opportunity to ask questions about invasive species, timber stand improvement, harvesting and best management practices. After lunch which was provided by IFWO participants got to see a sawmill demonstration first hand as Robert worked his magic. A pasture field day held in Eastern Greene County was a Clean Water Indiana partnership between Greene, Monroe and Owen Co SWCD's. This event gave the over 60 participants the opportunity to see rotational grazing in action. Guest speaker, Victor Shelton, NRCS Grazing Specialist, provided exceptional information about pasture improvement possibilities. Local FFA

chapters served as parking attendants and tour guides. The District in partnership with Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources Division of Fire Protection, Monroe Co. Parks and Recreation and Ellettsville Fire Department held a Burn Workshop for agency personnel helping them learn about the needed safety requirements of administering a native grass burn and teaching them how to develop and write a burn plan.

The floods in the spring of 2008 presented unbelievable challenges for all Federal, State and Local agencies dealing with natural disasters and conservation. From the city to the country, no one in Southern Indiana was left unaffected in some form or another. The Monroe Co SWCD had been granted a \$10,000 dollar Clean Water Indiana grant to do local conservation. In the days immediately following the flooding, the local board of supervisors requested from the State Soil Conservation Board to redirect that funding to those needing disaster assistance. That request was granted. Then the SSCB asked districts to provide a quick estimate of the damages in their county. Once that data was received the SSCB made additional funding available to districts with disaster needs. Monroe Co. received an additional \$12,500. A total of \$22,500 has been allocated or paid to Monroe Co. landholders for conservation disaster assistance through the local SWCD.

During the flooding the board of supervisors for Monroe Co. SWCD established there was a need to find assistance funding for the Bean Blossom watershed. A partnership was formed between Brown and Monroe Co. SWCD's to act as lead agencies and bring interested parties to the table to begin the process of finding funding for conservation work in the Bean Blossom watershed. In May of 2008 a group of 30 individuals representing not-for profits, for profits, federal, state and local government agencies, and private citizens assembled to discuss the need and possible outcome of an implementation grant for the Bean Blossom Watershed. It was a unanimous agreement that there was a need. So began the process of compiling data, writing and preparing a 319 grant application for the Bean Blossom Watershed. In September 2008 the Monroe Co SWCD submitted an application in the amount of \$600,060 to IDEM. In December the application was sent back for adjustments. That grant has been ranked and will be forwarded on to EPA for consideration. We should know in the late spring or early summer of the status.

Since 2004 the district has been holding an annual tree sale and sales have steadily increased each year. In 2008 a total of 125+ native trees and shrubs were purchased adding to the “greening” of Monroe and surrounding counties. The goal for 2009 is to have 200 or more trees purchased. Monroe Co. is a proud participant of the Hoosier Heartland RC&D’s Plant-A-Million project for more information go to www.plantamillion.org.

As a final honor for me the board of supervisors nominated me for the award of Multi-task district employee of the year. With letters of support from the County Commissioners and partnering SWCD staff, the nomination reviewers felt I was deserving of this honor. The article in Agrinews read as follows *“SWCD employees cited for service. Multi-task: Martha Miller, Monroe County SWCD. Miller always is willing to do whatever it takes to see a project to completion. She takes the time to help everyone who comes into the office or calls with a question. Miller is not bound by 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. work hours as she willingly meets with constituents, supervisors, government agents and other SWCD staff members whenever the need arises. She attends workshops, training programs and other events to add to her knowledge base so she can better assist supervisors, agency personnel and the public”* – www.agrinews-pubs.com

In summary, the past five years have each been outstanding opportunities of learning both professionally and personally. Each year just gets better, new challenges to face, new adventures to experience, new people to meet, new things to learn and I trust that 2009 will be no exception.

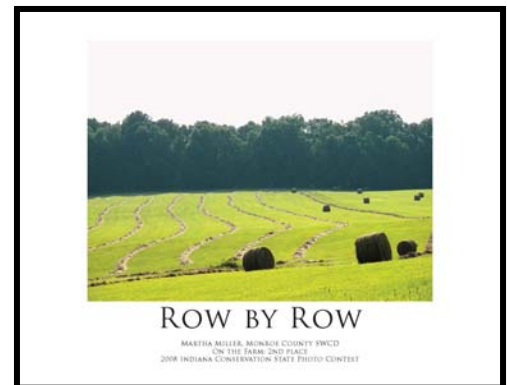
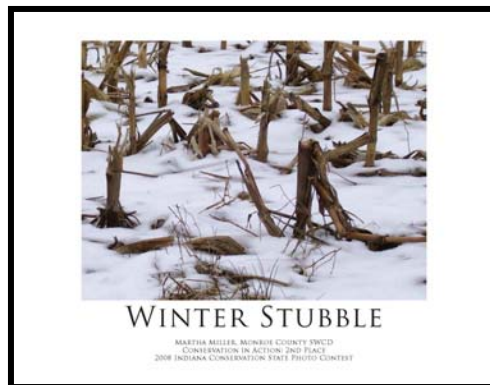
There are too many people to thank and not miss someone important but I want to mention a few of those that I deal with on a regular basis. These people make my life so much easier and it is a pleasure to work with them. Thank you to the, County Commissioners and their Office Staff; Jane Marie Lind, Jill Escobedo and Faye , The Farm Service Agency staff: Troy Hobson, Jean Molique, Donna Keith, and Linda Root; the NRCS staff, Brook Rieman, Tom Varns, Dan Hoveland, and JoEllen Witt and the Rural Development staff, Deb Boudreau, Sherry Myers, Julia Deibert, Shelly Lewis, Kelly Hobson and Keith Milligan. All Associate Supervisors and Both Past and Current Board of Supervisors. My fellow SWCD employees Cathy Paradise, Brown Co; Debra Lynn, Greene Co.; and Gwen Dieter, Owen Co. Lastly all the land holders: you are the root of why I do what I do – if not for all of you I would not be able to do what I do and I look forward to working with you all for many years to come.

Martha Miller



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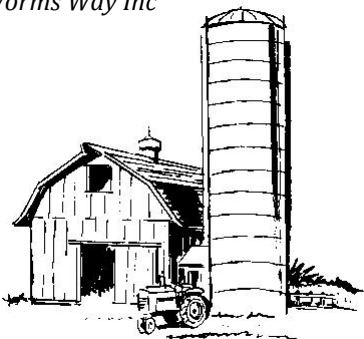
Above: Photographs taken by Martha Miller. They are of **Conservation In Action** in Monroe County. Both won in the State Dept. of Ag, Div. Soil photo contest and are on display at the Dept. of Ag in Indianapolis.

To the Left is Martha with Lt. Governor Skillman at the unveiling of the photographs at the State House.

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- Walnut Grove Spring Water
- Worms Way Inc



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Brook Rieman, District Coordinator

In 2008, NRCS worked with 17 Monroe County residents to plan rotational grazing systems and helped 14 producers plan forestry and wildlife habitat improvement projects for their properties. We also assisted many folks with highly erodible land and wetland determinations. Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), we helped landowners install fence for rotational grazing, water pipeline, spring developments, heavy use area protection, pasture and hay plantings, cover crop and more. Through the Wildlife Incentives Program (WHIP), we provided cost share to control invasive species, complete timber stand improvement and plant wildlife friendly grasses.

As you know, 2008 turned out to be quite an interesting year for natural resources in Monroe County. In June, floods whipped through the area, carrying lots of top soil away and depositing it in streams and lakes. The result was many scoured fields, washed out stream crossings and fences, increased streambank erosion, and log jams. Landowners and operators in Monroe County worked hard to repair the damage and replant fields where they could. It looks as though we will see the impact of this flood well into the coming years, due to lost fertility and organic matter. Experts have found that the quickest way to reclaim the soil quality in scoured fields is to plant cover crops. Providing cover throughout the year will re-establish mycorrhizae and reintroduce organic matter and nutrients to the soil.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service's EQIP program can help offset the cost of the planting of cover crops as well as many other conservation practices. For more information, call Brook Rieman at 812-334-4325 ext. 3.



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