



Conservation News

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The Clinton County Soil and Water Conservation District encourages you to think about your personal responsibility to be a good steward of natural resources during its annual Stewardship Week celebration. The National Assn. of Conservation Districts has proclaimed April 24th-May 1 Stewardship Week marking the 56th year of the national event. The 2011 Stewardship Week is themed "Forests for People...More Than You Can Imagine" encouraging citizens, schools and communities to discover the importance of trees for agriculture, economic development, recreation, wildlife, and for healthy communities. Materials are available at www.nacdnet.org/stewardship/2011. Children in grades k-12 are invited to participate in the annual poster contest using the current theme. If you or someone you know would like to participate please call for more information.

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Becoming Involved in Your Local Soil & Water Conservation District

What is a Soil and Water Conservation District? Across the United States, nearly 3000 conservation districts—almost one in every county— are helping local people to conserve land, water, forests, wildlife and related natural resources. Conservation Districts were originally formed during the days of the Dust Bowl to combat the severe erosion problems caused by intense farming practices. Since that time, SWCD's have adapted to provide local assistance on a broad array of natural resource issues. They are local units of state government, established to carry out activities that will make their community a better place to live. District activities lead to sustainable communities, prudent land use, and sound

management and conservation of natural resources.

The Clinton County Soil and Water Conservation District is governed by a five member board of 3 elected and 2 appointed supervisors. The Board of Supervisors direct the Districts' programs and activities. Their duties include identifying soil, water and related natural resource concerns, setting priorities and then developing long and short range plans and programs to address these prioritized concerns.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts offer assistance in partnership with ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, IDNR,

Purdue Cooperative Extension, FSA, IDEM, and local units of government. Locally led Soil and Water Conservation Districts are uniquely qualified to mold themselves to meet the local needs of their communities. Please continue reading to learn more about what YOUR SWCD is doing for you!

SAVE THE DATE!

Want to learn more? Consider attending the annual meeting of the CCSWCD on March 2nd, 2011 beginning at 6 pm.

When the land does well for its owner, and the owner does well by his land—when both end up better by reason of their partnership—then we have conservation. - Aldo Leopold

NRCS Extends Sign-up Period for Conservation Stewardship Program

State Conservationist Jane Hardisty of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced that the sign-up period for producers to apply for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) has been extended to January 7, 2011.

All producers are encouraged to apply for CSP. The program

authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, offers payments to producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and who agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland, and non-industrial private forestland. The program provides many conservation benefits including improvement

of water and soil quality, wildlife habitat enhancement and adoption of conservation activities that address the effects of climate change.

To apply for CSP, or for additional information visit the USDA Service Center located at 860 S. Prairie Ave., Frankfort, IN 46041 or call 765-659-1223 extension 3.

Water Quality Sampling Under Way for the South Fork Wildcat Creek Watershed Management Planning Project

Water quality testing has begun in the South Fork Wildcat Creek Watershed. The testing is part of a 319 Clean Water Act Grant to create a comprehensive watershed management plan (WMP) for the South Fork Wildcat Creek Watershed. The plan will address the water quality impairments currently documented in the stream and those that are found during the testing to preserve the South Fork's current diversity and beauty.

Testing is being conducted by Commonwealth Biomonitoring and the Clinton County SWCD. Sampling for various parameters is occurring at sixteen different sites along the South Fork Wildcat Creek and its tributaries (see map below). Parameters being checked include: Atrazine, Chemistry

(such as nitrate+nitrite and total phosphorus), Flow, Biological Monitoring, Habitat Assessments, and *E. coli*. All water quality sampling sites are located at bridges with easy access and where entering private land is minimal. So, please do not be alarmed if you see us out sampling!

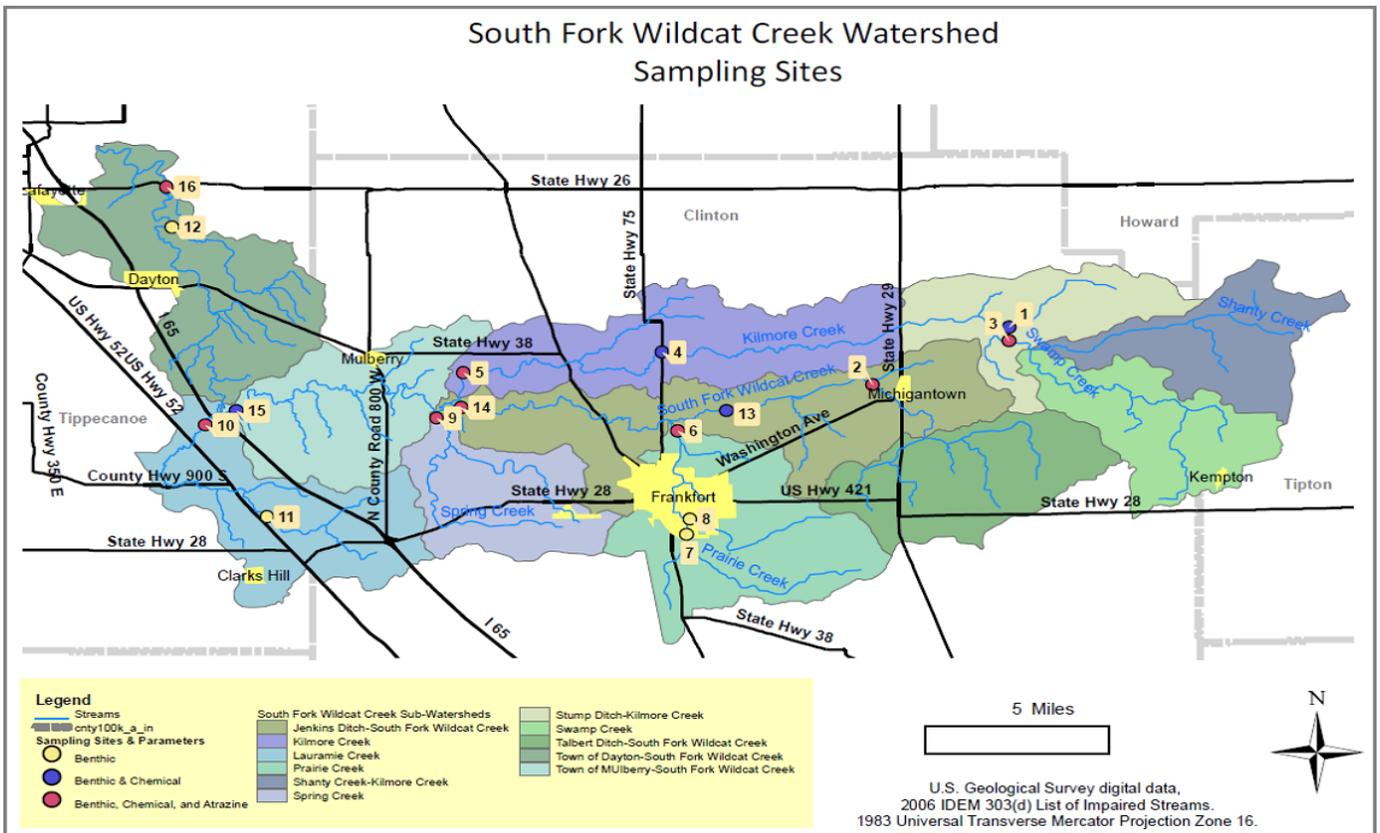
By conducting water quality sampling before the watershed management plan is implemented, we will be able to target the types of conservation practices that are needed to get the most improvement in water quality and select areas that require more extensive restoration. This also allows us the ability to estimate the financial amount required to install the most effective conservation practices; in turn allowing us to be more

competitive when applying for future grant funding.

The WMP that is created as a result of our Partnerships and community input will belong to those who create it.

We are grateful for the talents and experience that our community provides, and would appreciate any assistance or participation. Contact Cindy Muffett at the CCSWCD today to learn more about this unique project or to provide feedback on what your concerns are for the South Fork Wildcat Creek Watershed!

The vision of the South Fork Wildcat Creek Watershed Steering Committee is a clear, natural and inviting stream highly regarded for recreation and wildlife opportunities.



South Fork Wildcat Creek & Kilmore Creek Cost-Share Program: Nearing Completion

The South Fork Wildcat Creek & Kilmore Creek Cost-Share Program began in October 2008 and all practices applied for through the program must be installed before May 15, 2011.

If you've been considering participating in this program to receive assistance with the installation of a conservation practice on your operation, contact the CCSWCD today to complete an application!

To date, over \$100,000 worth of conservation practices have been installed in the targeted watershed area. Examples of practices installed include: no-till equipment modifications, Pest Management Plans, Nutrient Manage-

ment Plans, Flow meters, and Guided Measure Technology (lightbars, auto steer, auto booms). The installation of these practices is reducing the amount of sediment and nutrients that is running off of or leaching from our fields in to our streams and ditches.

Reductions in sediment and nutrients will increase the numbers and types of small aquatic insects in the streams (macroinvertebrates) which will in turn improve the amount and quality of our fish species. This equals increased recreational opportunities. Another benefit: less sedimentation in our streams would naturally increase the capacity of the stream to hold

more water during large rain events within its banks, thus potentially decreasing flooding locally and downstream.

A variety of practices are available and both landowners and operators may apply. Contact our office today to *discover the cost-share program designed with you in mind!*

Time is running out!

All practices applied for through the cost-share program must be installed and working *prior* to
May 15, 2011

Water Conserving Rain Barrels

A rain barrel is a container used to collect and store rainwater from your roof that can then be used later to water plants, wash your car, or add to a swimming pool. Ordinarily the water would simply be diverted to a storm drain or out onto your property. This "soft water" contains no chlorine, lime or calcium, so your plants will love it. Other benefits include protecting the environment from driveway and yard run-off, saving money by lowering your household water bill, and reducing the amount of water possibly flowing into storm sewers.

The SWCD is currently taking orders for rain barrels. The 55 gallon barrels come in Blue, Black, Terra-Cotta and Gray. Each one comes with a hose shutoff on the front which accepts a standard garden hose thread. A fitting with a cap towards the bottom is for linking multiple barrels together, if you wish. Towards the top is an overflow fitting and cap where the homeowner can install a short section of an old garden hose to direct the water to a more acceptable location after the barrel is full. This overflow eventually lowers

the water back below the screen on top of the lid. Plastic fittings are used because brass and steel do not interface well with plastic barrels, which could leak.

The hole(s) in the top is/are covered with residential grade aluminum screening which is strong enough to keep shingle grit, leaves, debris, small animals and mosquitoes from getting into the barrel.

The homeowner has a couple options to redirect the water from the downspout. Both involve cutting the downspout off a few inches above the height of the rain barrel. One can then add an inexpensive flexible tube available from a hardware store or reattach the bottom angle piece off of the cut off downspout so that it points towards the top of the barrel.

Homeowners should place their barrel on a pedestal approximately 12 inches high, which allows easy use of a watering can without unscrewing the top and it also increases water pressure. This pedestal can be made out of treated

wood or concrete blocks.

The cost of the rain barrel is \$70.00 (including tax). If you are interested in ordering one, please send an e-mail message to leah.harden@in.nacdn.net or call the office at 765-659-1223 ext. 3. Please indicate the number you would like to have and the color, if there is a preference. When they are available, we will contact you to arrange a pick up time and for payment. Orders will be taken until May 15, 2011.



Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) Funded in the Wildcat Creek

The Mississippi River basin is a critical ecosystem in the U.S. - equaling 41% of the country. The basin drains to the Mississippi River which carries an average of 436,000 tons of sediment each day to the Gulf of Mexico. Nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, are carried down-stream with the sediment and cause water quality issues both locally and within the hypoxic zone of the Gulf.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has developed the MRBI to address these water quality problems. The goal is to encourage producers to voluntarily implement conservation systems that avoid, control, and trap field runoff; protect, restore, and enhance wetlands; maintain agricultural productivity; and improve wildlife habitat.

Nationally, \$50 million was available in financial assistance through the MRBI-CCPI (Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative) to eligible partnership projects in 41 focus areas. The Greater Wabash River Resource Conservation & Development Council (GWRRCD) partnered with the Carroll, Clinton, Howard, Tipton, and Tippecanoe County SWCDs and a host of others to submit an application to bring

2.25 million dollars to our counties over three years. Through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), producers will be able to apply for funding to install conservation practices that will benefit both them and the environment.

In fiscal year 2011 nearly one million dollars will be available to landowners in targeted watersheds through the EQIP program to install practices such as: Residue and Tillage Management, Waste Utilization, Cover Crops, Grassed Waterways, and Nutrient Management. Through the WHIP program, \$75,375 will be available in 2011 to install practices to enhance wildlife habitat such as wetland creation and restoration and wildlife plantings.

What makes the MRBI-CCPI EQIP and WHIP different? The planning committee worked hard to make the MRBI-CCPI attractive so that as many conservation practices as possible could be installed by our producers at a low cost. Instead of applications competing against others in the state, you'll only be competing against others in the Wildcat Creek focus area (making the likelihood that you'll receive funding higher). Additionally, the partners

involved in the initiative are committed to making the application process easier for you by assisting participants in meeting local, state, and federal regulatory requirements; assisting with conservation planning; and even assisting you, the producer, during the application process.

When you look out across the bountiful fields of Clinton County each morning as you prepare to begin an honest day's work, it's difficult to imagine that the management activities you're doing here impact other people's livelihoods in the Gulf. But, the fact is that it does. And, the MRBI-CCPI is a great opportunity to make a change to your management practices that will help preserve your land for future generations, maintain and improve your productivity, and be economical to you while lessening our impact downstream.

Additional information about the Mississippi River Basin Initiative – Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative can be found online at: http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/MRBI/MRBI_homepage.html

For more information please contact the USDA Service Center at 659-1223 extension 3.

NRCS Notes

Program Decision Support System

RFF recently completed an online tool to help landowners find appropriate federal programs for their property and conservation goals. The Conservation Programs Decision Support System (DSS) was built with support from a Conservation Innovation Grant from USDA, NRCS. Check it out at www.icaer.com.

Conservation Compliance

Do you intend to clear timber to create or

expand existing cropland?

- Are you converting a pasture field to cropland?
- Are you planning drainage projects such as installing new tile lines or grading wet spots in a field?
- Are you planning on clearing a fence row?

These are Highly Erodible and Wetland provision questions that need to be considered

each year by producers to assure that they remain eligible for USDA benefits.

If you have questions or concerns about something that you plan to do on your farm that may jeopardize your eligibility for benefits, please contact your local Farm Service Agency or Natural Resources Conservation Service representative BEFORE you begin any work.

Clinton County USDA Service Center can be reached at 659-1223 ext 3 (NRCS) or ext. 2 (FSA).

How is My Lawn Connected to Clean Water?

With recent heavy rains, now might be a good time for homeowners to ask a simple question- How is my lawn connected to clean water? A new campaign "Clear Choices for Clean Water" is working hard to answer that question and increase awareness about lawn care and its impact on our streams and lakes. Water quality friendly lawn care includes practices such as using phosphorus-free fertilizer, landscaping with native plants, managing yard and pet wastes, and overall lawn reform. Protecting healthy and adequate water supplies takes the partnership of individual residents, businesses, local governments, civic groups and educators at all levels. To learn more about this campaign visit the

www.ClearChoicesCleanWater.org web site.

Individual homeowners and renters control most of the land in Indiana. How they manage water on private properties is critical to keeping public water supplies healthy. Simple actions, such as picking up pet wastes helps. As waste decomposes it releases nutrients (like phosphorus), and bacteria (like E.coli) that may wash into storm drains and then into local streams untreated. Avoiding putting grass clipping or leaves into storm sewers also helps. Yard waste can be composted or grass clippings can be left to decompose on the lawn and provide natural fertilizer for a lawn. Homeowners are encouraged to talk to their

neighbors about what they are doing. Business owners often represent the leadership in a local community and manage the landscapes of places that people frequently visit. These properties could be showcases for clean water! Members of every community participate in groups, churches, organizations, and events that link them together as part of a community. Through these groups and activities, individuals can have a voice and have an impact on others around them. These "others" (friends, colleagues, neighbors, local politicians) are making choices which affect water quality every day. Good water quality needs the involvement of the whole community! More details and ideas are available on the Clear Choices web site.

Financial Assistance Available to Plug and Cap Abandoned Water Wells

The Clinton County Soil and Water Conservation District has been awarded a Clean Water Indiana grant from the Indiana State Department of Agriculture to provide a cost-share incentive to rural landowners who have identified and would like to plug and cap abandoned water wells on their property. The SWCD may provide cost-share at a rate of 75% of

actual costs up to \$500.00 per well. Decommissioning of the well may not begin until an application has been received and approved by the SWCD Board of Supervisors.

Abandoned water wells provide a direct conduit to groundwater, which is the source of drinking water for virtually all homes in Clinton County. These wells present a potentially

serious threat to groundwater quality and some cases may present a physical safety hazard where a child or pet may fall into a well. Plugging an abandoned well can eliminate these risks on your property.

For more information about this cost-share program contact the SWCD office at 765-659-1223 ext. 3.

No-Till Breakfast Meeting Announced

On February 15, 2011 Soil and Water Conservation Districts from Clinton, Tippecanoe, Montgomery, Warren and Benton counties will host a no-till breakfast meeting for area farmers.

Hans Kok, Conservation Cropping System Initiative will facilitate discussion on the benefits AND challenges of no-till farming.

The event will be held at the Trails

near Battleground Indiana. Registration and breakfast will begin at 7 AM and the program will begin at 7:45 AM.

All are welcome to attend but the program is targeted towards the serious no-tiller who would like to participate in roundtable discussions with other no-till farmers.

This program is being funded in part by a grant received from the Indiana State

Department of Agriculture—Clean Water Indiana Initiative.

Door prizes will be awarded to attendees and handouts will be provided.

Reservations are required as space is limited. Please call the Clinton County Soil and Water Conservation District at 765-659-1223 extension 3.

Forest Management for Private Woodland Owner Workshop

A course entitled "Forest Management for the Private Woodland Owner" will be offered by Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service to assist private landowners in becoming more knowledgeable managers of their woodland resource. The course will be held on eight weekly evening sessions beginning February 22 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Purdue Cooperative Extension, Tippecanoe County, 3150 Sagamore Parkway South, Lafayette, IN 47905. There will also be two Saturday morning field trips scheduled to experience first-hand woodland management activities.

Class topics to be covered include forest resource and tree identification, forest biology and ecology, forest cultivation, managing woodland investment, timber marketing and finding assistance for your forest management needs. The registration fee is \$99.00 and includes the cost of the course, printed materials, and field trips. Attendees who wish to receive the printed materials on a CD may attend for \$49.00. Couples or families pay \$99.00 for the first member and \$29.00 for each additional attendee.

The emphasis of the course will be devoted to teaching basic forest management principles. If you own woodland, sell timber occasionally, manage a tree plantation or are considering some forestry investment, this class is a must for you. Beginning with the basics of tree identification and how a tree grows, the class will explore

the management of our hardwood forests, the diverse Indiana forest products industry and the many products and benefits we derive from our forests.

The class also discusses soil and site considerations, species selection and planting techniques, weed control, and insect and disease problems for those who are planting trees or managing tree plantations. Participants will learn the basics and receive hands-on experience to manage established timber stands including quality and volume estimations on a Saturday field trip in the woods. When done properly, timber stand improvement is a proven method of increasing the quality and growth rate of a woodland. However, selecting the right trees to manage for are very important decisions. Research has indicated that simple management techniques such as deadening cull trees, thinning, and vine control may significantly improve the growth and health of woodlands.

Your woodland may contain trees that are mature, overcrowded, or otherwise not increasing in value or vigor. Selecting the proper trees to sell and using the best marketing procedures will ensure that the seller will receive the highest value for their timber. Did you know that by allowing a

16 inch diameter white oak to grow to 24 inches may increase its value by four times or more? Class participants will learn the best methods of selling timber to maximize the return on the woodland investment and maintain a healthy forest.

How do you treat the extra income from your timber sale at tax time? What is a depletion allowance and how are woodland-related expenses handled, are only a few of the topics to be covered in the taxation session. A little knowledge can save a woodland owner many dollars at tax time.

Sign up today for this enlightening and educational class sponsored by the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service and Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, Hoosier Heartland Resource Conservation and Development Council Forestry Committee, Greater Wabash River Resource Conservation & Development Council, Indiana Division of Forestry, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and the West Central Indiana Cooperative Weed Management Area.

Class size is limited to 45 registrants on a first-come, first-serve basis. Advance registration is required by February 14, 2011.

To register or for more information contact Lenny Farlee, Program Coordinator, at (765) 494-2153 or by email at lfarlee@purdue.edu. Visit the Hoosier Heartland RC&D website at www.hhrccd.org to obtain a brochure.



South Fork Wildcat Creek Watershed Project Hosts an Open House

Join us December 6th from 6-8PM at the Frankfort Library to learn more about the South Fork Wildcat Creek and the organizations and agencies working to protect it. Come watch the new "Wildcat Creek Community Treasure" video produced by the Wildcat Guardians and then learn about where our water comes from as you watch the entertaining and educational feature "Drop by Drop: Protecting Indiana's Water Supply" produced by WFYI.

The Clinton County Soil & Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) and the Steering Committee for the South Fork Wildcat Creek Watershed Project will be on hand to discuss the project and how we're

working to make a difference in the community. Additionally, groups and businesses such as the Wildcat Creek Foundation, Clinton County Health Department, Clinton County Extension Service, and Hoosier Aquatic Management will have booths of information about how they work to protect the Wildcat Creek and how you can become involved.

The Open House is part of an effort to increase the awareness of the resources we have in the South Fork Wildcat Creek Watershed through a grant received from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to create a watershed management plan (WMP) for

the South Fork Wildcat Creek Watershed. The WMP will address the water quality impairments documented in the creek and work to preserve its current diversity and beauty.

Mark your calendars for December 6th from 6-8PM to stop by the Frankfort Library and learn more about the South Fork Wildcat Creek. Children's activities, snacks, and refreshments will compliment the evening along with a few unique door prizes! Come anytime you can between 6-8PM! Contact the CCSWCD for more information at (765) 659-1223 extension 3.

USDA Announces Loan Program for Natural Resource Conservation

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the launch of a Conservation Loan (CL) program that will provide farm owners and farm-related business operators access to credit to implement conservation techniques that will conserve natural resources.

“This will give farmers who want to implement conservation measures on their lands a chance to do so by providing assistance with their up-front costs,” said Vilsack. “In return, these producers will help to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and promote sustainable and organic agricultural practices.”

CL funds can be used to implement conservation practices approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), such as the installation of conservation structures; establishment of forest cover; installation of water conservation measures; establishment or improvement of permanent pastures; implementation of manure management; and the adaptation of other emerging or existing conservation practices, techniques or technologies.

Direct CLs can be obtained through local Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices with loan limits up to \$300,000. Guaranteed CLs up to \$1,112,000 are available from lenders working with FSA.

For more information on the Conservation Loan program, contact a local FSA office or visit the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov. For more information about this announcement please see the notice which will appear in the September 3 edition of the Federal Register:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/federa/Notices?area=home&subject=lare&topic=frd-ii>

Effects of Conservation Practices on Cropland

A recent multi-agency USDA study provides farmers and landowners valuable information on how conservation practices are impacting water quality by reducing sediment, nutrient and pesticide loss in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. The study documents the following:

- Use of soil erosion control practices is widespread, reducing sediment loss from fields by 60%,
- On average conservation practices have reduced total nitrogen loss from fields by 18%, reduced total phosphorous loss by 49% and reduced pesticide loss from fields to surface water, resulting in a 48% reduction in edge of field pesticide risk for humans.

These reductions in field level losses due to conservation practices translate

into improvements in water quality in streams and rivers in the region.

Conservation practice use has made good progress toward reducing sediment, nutrient and pesticide losses from farm fields. However, significant conservation treatment is still needed to reduce nonpoint agricultural sources of pollution to acceptable levels.

Complete and consistent use of nutrient management practices is generally lacking, with 62% of the acres requiring additional treatment to reduce the loss of nitrogen and phosphorous from farm fields. The most critical conservation concern is the loss of nitrogen through leaching on half of the cropped acres. Nitrogen leaching loss is controlled by pairing erosion control practices with nutrient management practices for rate, form, timing and method of application.

Currently good nitrogen management practices are in use on only about 14% of the acres for all crops during every year of production. Similarly, good phosphorous management practices are in use on 29% of acres for all crops during every year of production.

In the final analysis, treatment with nutrient management practices in addition to soil erosion control practices is required to effectively control the loss of soluble nitrogen and phosphorous from farm fields in the Upper Mississippi River Basin.

To learn more about this study (entitled the “Assessment of the Effects of Conservation Practices on Cultivated Cropland in the Upper Mississippi River Basin”), visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nri/ceap

**CLINTON COUNTY SOIL AND
WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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We're on the web!

clintonswcd.org

The following individuals and businesses support the Soil and Water Conservation Districts' programs and initiatives.....many thanks!



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