President’s Message

2015 marks a special year in the history of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Indiana – our 75th anniversary. Soil and Water Conservation Districts were established in 1937 with the Soil Conservation Districts Act, and Vanderburgh County created Indiana’s first district in 1940. This year, we look back on the past with pride in what has been accomplished, and look to the future with a renewed focus on the protection of our most essential natural resources.

During July of 2014, we had the opportunity to showcase Indiana’s conservation accomplishments for a national audience during the National Association of Conservation Districts’ Soil Health Forum and Conservation Tour in Indianapolis. Conservationists from around the country convened in Indianapolis for seminars, panels, and visits to three local farms that have incorporated soil health and conservation practices. Speaking at the event, ISDA Director Ted McKinney underscored the current momentum behind conservation agriculture when he said, “We are at a true ‘man on the moon’ moment. We have the leadership, the technology, and the will of the people to make it happen.” Not only did Indiana receive recognition for our work in soil health, but for our collaborative spirit in partnering across agencies and county lines.

This year, The Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI) marked its fifth year with numerous soil health events including twenty-five field days with over 1,700 attendees. There was an increased outreach effort to certified crop advisors and agriculture professionals, as well as soil health investigations with over 1,200 soil samples pulled. CCSI continues to grow and reach more people with the conservation message, which wouldn’t be possible without your support.

In 2015 and beyond, we will continue to pursue the following goals:
- To enable the local Districts and their leadership to be successful
- To improve the environment and quality of life for citizens of Indiana
- To improve the conservation of our natural resources

This year, let’s take a moment to reflect on our past to celebrate and to guide us towards a bright future in natural resource conservation for many more years to come!

Jeff Meinders
IASWCD President
Communications & Outreach
IASWCD used various tools to inform our members and the public about soil and water conservation issues. In 2014, the IASWCD:
• Delivered the bi-monthly “Conservation Update” eNewsletter;
• Communicated District successes and accomplishments through media and news releases;
• Provided an eNewsletter for state legislators to communicate SWCD and conservation news;
• Continuous update of the resource-packed association website at www.iaswcd.org;
• Promoted outstanding conservation efforts through various awards:
  • River Friendly Farmer - 57 recipients
  • Friend of Conservation – 3 recipients
  • Conservation Farmer of the Year – 1 Recipient
  • District Showcase Tour – 2 recipients
  • SWCD Supervisor of the Year – State winner
• Communicated news releases and other important natural resource information to a broader audience through Twitter and Facebook posts on a regular basis;
• Contracted for a Coordinator for the ICP Pathway to Water Quality committee and successfully completed the 21st season of PWQ at the State Fair; and
• Convened a task force of SWCD Supervisors and Staff to look at the future of the SWCD Annual Conference. In addition, a survey to all members was conducted.

Advocacy
Key efforts from the IASWCD this year:
• Updated SWCDs on a weekly basis during the legislative short session;
• Actively participated on the Indiana Conservation Alliance and represented Soil and Water Conservation Districts at the 2014 Conservation Day event held at the Statehouse.

Presented Rep. Karickhoff with an award for his work in helping to increase the CWI general fund appropriation.
• Actively participated in NACD’s Natural Resources Policy Committee on national issues;
• Participated in Legislator tours with other partners; and
• Convened a small task force of SWCD supervisors and staff to look at funding Clean Water Indiana into the future.

Capacity Building
Key efforts from the IASWCD this year:
• Provided the monthly Development eNewsletter to SWCDs and watershed organizations around the state, maintained the Conservation Development Resource webpage;
• Successfully garnered $43,000 in sponsorships for the 2014 SWCD Annual Conference. These sponsorships help offset the cost of conferences;
• Partnered with ISDA and NRCS to provide information and training at regional meetings;
• Supported and assisted with the SWCD Chair/Vice Chair workshop; and
• Reorganized IASWCD staff positions and hired a new Assistant Director.

Leadership
The IASWCD Board of Directors and its staff strive to provide consistent and quality leadership for Districts. This year the association:
• Successfully co-hosted the National Association of Conservation Districts Summer Soil Health Forum and Tour in Indianapolis with over 250 in attendance from across the country;
• Hosted the 71st Annual Conference of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, January 6-8, 2014. Due to extreme weather conditions, only 125 were able to be in attendance;
• Represented SWCDs on the Leadership Institute subcommittee; the State Technical Committee, the Indiana Conservation Partnership Leaders meetings; State Soil Conservation Board meetings, and other state level committees;
• Represented SWCDs at the National level on various NACD committees.

District Member Benefits
Everything the IASWCD does is for its members. In 2014, the IASWCD:
• Successfully completed a NRCS contribution agreement which provided $349,600 to 66 SWCDs to complete CRP status reviews;
• Provided a Supervisor Scholarship Program offering assistance to supervisors to attend the 2014 and 2015 SWCD Annual Conference;
• Conveyed important NRCS information to Districts through a contribution agreement for communication services; and
• Provided liability insurance coverage for Districts.

Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative
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