

## STILL HAVE THE DRILL!

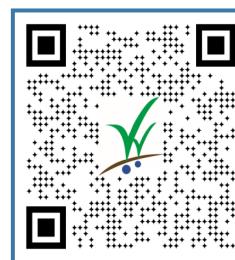
As many of you know, the District owns a Great Plains 606NT drill seeder that is available for rent to landowners who would like to install pollinator or wildlife habitat. This seeder also works well for over-seeding and installing pastures. This past winter we were able to send it out to be renovated and it was used many times this past season with success. Not every conservation district has equipment but Marshall County SWCD felt that it could be very useful in our conservation efforts. It is allowed to go out within a 30 mile radius of the office, so land-owners in neighboring counties can rent it too. We limit that radius due to wear and tear during transportation. The charge is \$80 to rent, and then an additional \$8/acre. It requires a 40HP tractor with external hydraulic to operate and is 6' wide. The District has a grant that will help pay for pollinator habitat, so if you have a couple acres that you are tired of mowing, give us a call! This seeder can make it easy to install!



## PRODUCER'S MEETING!

Marshall and St. Joseph counties have worked together for a number of years to organize a Producer's Meeting in the early part of the season. The event has been held in Lakeville at their new Community Center for the past several years. This year's event was held on February 26th and featured speakers included Bryan Overstreet from CCSI and PARP credits were available for those that needed them. Attendees shared their experiences with conservation practices while they enjoyed a complimentary lunch.

This year's Producer's Meeting will be held on February 26th at 9:00 a.m. with Megan Bournes from Purdue speaking about making soil health decisions to meet economic goals. PARP credits will be offered and lunch provided. Registration required!



## A NEW REGIONAL SPECIALIST!

We continue to wrangle weeds (read as "fight invasive plants") here in Marshall County and we have a new fearless leader! AJ Popovic started with SICIM (State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management) this year and has been hard at work, as seen in this photo taken this fall at Rum Village in South Bend..... that is a whopper of a bittersweet vine that he is wrestling! AJ has an engineering degree from Purdue, but then read the book *The Natural Heritage of Indiana* and was so inspired that he started volunteering with the Shirley Heinze Land Trust and also worked at Pure Green Farms in South Bend, where he completed a native wetland prairie restoration project. This lead him to take the position of regional specialist with SICIM. He has continued his education of native plants and is passionate about the management of invasives in the woodlands of northern Indiana. SICIM is able to offer landowners a free survey of their properties to educate and guide them to be good stewards of their land. The survey will list the invasive plants identified on the property and provide a guide to their management. If you are interested in a survey, contact him at [NWregion@sicim.info](mailto:NWregion@sicim.info). Welcome, AJ! We look forward to working with you in '26!

## NATIVE PLANT SALE!

The District has offered flats of native grasses and forbs during the native plant sale held in the spring of the year. For 2026, the sale will be held later in the year for September delivery. Native plants can add so much to your property, supporting pollinators and wildlife. This is an easy way to get started, with several mixes being offered for different soil types and sun exposures. Have an area in your yard that stays wet? Create a raingarden! A dry spot or shady spot where your turf won't grow? Plant a shade garden or a small prairie area! These plants are offered in flats of 50 plants, consisting of a mix of several species and sell for \$150. With one flat, an area of at least 10 x 10 can be planted, creating a small habitat that can be marked with a sign in your yard showing how important the plants are! We can also help you to choose what could work best for your situation, just ask! Watch our FB page and website for ordering information in 2026! #gonative



## CONSERVATION CONVERSATIONS

2025

# ANNUAL REPORT

## FULFILLING OUR PURPOSE

The purpose of Soil and Water Conservation Districts is "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 educational, technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices and technologies". The sign that states that purpose hangs in the office to remind us everyday of why the office exists. Every county in the state has a Soil and Water Conservation District. Districts partner with the other members of the Indiana Conservation Partnership (7 other agencies in the state, including the DNR, FSA, Purdue Extension, NRCS, IDEM, the State Soil Conservation Board and the Indiana State Department of Agriculture) to fulfill those purposes. Programs implemented by this formal partnership include the **Indiana Small Farms Conservation** program, focusing on Indiana's urban and small-scale farms; **Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative**, which promotes the adoption of practices and cropping systems that improve soil health; and the **Indiana Invasives Initiative**, which has led the way in combatting invasive plants and raising public awareness of this growing resource concern. So, with the help of the above partners, these are some of the activities and programs the District was able to participate in and provide in 2025.

We started out the year attending our annual conference in January, where our nominee for Friend of Conservation, Potawatomi Park, received the award. We co-hosted an event with the Marshall County Aggie group about soil health in high tunnels in January before also co-hosting the Producer's Meeting in February. We gave an educational presentation about native trees to the Master Gardener's in March and assisted with the Envirothon regional contest for high school students at Camp Buffalo near Monticello with our partners from the Arrowhead RC & D education committee. Our invasives working group SMIPP had an educational display at the Growing Summit in South Bend and also at two different native plant sales. The popular food plot and pollinator seed give-away was held in April and we also offered flats of native plants for sale. We par-



## THE ANNUAL MEETING—AN IMPORTANT EVENT FOR SWCD'S

**SAVE THE DATE!!! January 29, 2026 6:00 p.m.**

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are required by their by-laws to conduct an annual meeting. This event gives the voter is a person of voting age, a representative of a firm, county residents an opportunity to meet the board and staff of the district and to hear about the activities that the district has participated in throughout the year. This year's meeting will be held on Thursday January 29th at 6:00 p.m. at the Pretty Lake Church Community Hall. The speaker will be Scott Pelath, who heads up the KRBRYBDC, the Kankakee and Yellow River Basin Development Commission. Scott will be talking about the history of the rivers and the work that is currently being done to reduce silt and pollutants in the watershed. The annual meeting is also held to conduct elections for the District. This year the nomination committee has nominated Joel Fisher for re-election. Joel's bio can be read on page 3 of this report. Also up for election is new board member Drew Kelham. Drew stepped up earlier in the year to fill in for supervisor Craig Hawley, who was just re-elected last year. He is required to be officially re-elected for the remainder of Craig's term. Outside nominations may also be made at the Annual Meeting and voting will then take place. An eligible voter is a person of voting age, a representative of a firm, company or a corporation that owns or rents a tract of land properly located within the District. All parties of jointly held property may vote. We request that you either call in to our office at (574) 936-2024 ext. 3 or email us at [info@marshallcountyswcd.org](mailto:info@marshallcountyswcd.org) by January 16 if you are planning to attend. Tickets will be \$10 for the event. This fee will go toward a fabulous meal, catered by the Log Cabin Restaurant in Argos. We will be showing a brief Power Point presentation about the activities that the District has been involved in this past year and there will be some cool door prizes! Our Annual Financial Report will be posted on our website [www.marshallcountyswcd.org](http://www.marshallcountyswcd.org) for the public to view. It may also be picked up at our office at 2903 Gary Drive, sent by request, or viewed at the Annual Meeting. We encourage producers and interested homeowners in Marshall County to attend our Annual Meeting and meet our supervisors and staff. We would love to see you there!

## 2025 NRCS REPORTING YEAR

### CONSERVATION PRACTICE

	PLANNED AMT.	APPLIED
Conservation Practice	Planned Amount	Applied Amount
Brush Management (314) (Ac)	158	335
Brush Management to improve wildlife habitat (E314A) (Ac)	138	0
Conservation Cover (327) (Ac)	0	12
Cover Crop (340) (Ac)	0	1582
Existing Activity Payment - Land use (E300EAP1) (Ac)	445	189
Existing Activity Payment -Resource Concern (E300EAP2) (No)	10	12
Firebreak (394) (Ft)	0	1450
Forest management to enhance understory vegetation (E666D) (Ac)	0	47
Forest Stand Improvement (666) (Ac)	84	17
Hedgerow Planting (422) (ft)	1410	0
Herbaceous Weed Treatment (315) (Ac)	9	0
High Tunnel System (325) (SqFt)	0	2880
Nutrient Management (590) (Ac)	0	1035
Pasture and Hay Planting (512) (Ac)	5	0
Pest Management Conservation System (595) (Ac)	0	1035
Pest Management Conservation System Design (161) (No)	0	1
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till(329) (Ac)	141	1563
Tree/Shrub Establishment (612) (Ac)	4	14
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) (Ac)	17	169
Wetland Restoration (657) (Ac)	10	22
Wildlife Habitat Planting (420) (Ac)	9	0



**USDA and the Marshall County SWCD prohibit discrimination in their programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status.**

## MCSWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



**Mike Large**

Mike Large has served on the board since 2016, was reelected in 2018, 2021 and 2024. Mike graduated from Bethel College with a BS in Accounting. He currently owns and operates Large Farms LLC with his wife Terri and their four boys Connor, Caden, Colton and Camden.

Mike is the treasurer of the Camp Creek Church and is also the Chairman of the Marshall County REMC Board of Directors.



**Joel Fisher**

Joel Fisher was elected in 2023 and currently serves as Chairman. Joel lives in Culver with his wife Angie and works for Stantec Native Plant Nursery in Walkerton, IN, serving as their assistant business unit manager, overseeing the container stock and seed production. Joel also works on his 80 acre family farm and is restoring it back to native habitat. Joel and his family enjoy hunting, fishing and his favorite hobby, golfing! He is up for re-election at this year's annual meeting.



**Drew Kelham**

Drew stepped up this year to replace outgoing supervisor Craig Hawley. Drew is a proud Boilermaker, receiving degrees in Ag Economics and Ag Systems management from Purdue University. He is currently employed as an agent for Farm Bureau Insurance and is interested in conservation farming

and interacting with the producers of the county. Drew and his wife Abigail are expecting their first child in '26. He is up for official election at this year's annual meeting.



**Joe Skelton**

Joe has served as an associate supervisor for a number of years and moved up in '22 as an appointed supervisor to replace Rance Gingle. Joe and his wife Carol moved to Lake of the Woods after he retired as a Captain of the fire department in Calumet City. He is the treasurer of the Lake of the Woods Property Owner's Association and is also past President of the



**Tim Gochenour**

Tim is a 1992 graduate of Purdue University with a B.S. in electrical engineering. He is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force where he achieved the rank of TSgt. With his wife Stacha, they currently farm 800 acres in Bourbon and Tippecanoe Townships where they employ soil conservation practices such as

no till- and cover crops. They also have a farm seed business selling a variety of seeds including corn, soybeans, wheat, cover crops, deer/wildlife food plot and bee/butterfly and wildflower pollinator mixes. Hobbies include traveling to visit his grandchildren, hunting, fishing and riding his motorcycle. Tim was appointed in 2016 to fill a term, was re-appointed in '20, '23 and has been reappointed by the board for '26.

Board meetings are normally held the 2nd Wednesday of the month, at 8:00 a.m., times can vary depending upon the month. Meetings are open to the public and are generally held at the USDA Service Center at 2903 Gary Drive in Plymouth. Check our website to determine exact location and times. We hope to see you in '26!

## SMIPP CONTINUES TO “MAKE A DENT”

SMIPP is the acronym for our local CISMA. Memorial Forest, Potawatomi Wildlife Park, Huh? Two acronyms in one sentence! SMIPP stands for St. Joseph Marshall Invasive Plant Partnership and it is a CISMA, which is a recognized Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area. A CISMA is a partnership of federal, state, and local government agencies, tribes, individuals, and various interested groups that manage invasive species (or weeds) in a defined area. It is a group of local volunteers often led by conservation professionals (in this case, two neighboring Soil and Water Conservation Districts) who's goal is to educate and create awareness of the damaging impact that invasive plants have on local environments and then to hold volunteer events called Weed Wrangles to actively remove invasive plants from a public space. SMIPP has worked at the Marshall County

the City of Plymouth Centennial Park, Potato Creek State Park and Rum Village Park in South Bend. This group is one of the most active CISMA's in the state, holding two regular Weed Wrangles every month and then additional events in the spring and fall. They were awarded funds for their hard work from the state organization SICIM (State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management) and will be working on ways to utilize these funds in an impactful way, such as a possible bounty program to replace an invasive plant in the landscape with a good native plant. Follow them on Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/SMIPP.CISMA/> and join them for an event in 2026! Their motto is “Making a Dent”, working hard to manage invasives plants in our counties!

### OFFICE STAFF



**Jodie Overmyer**  
SWCD District



**Troy Manges**  
NRCS District  
Conservationist



**Chris Gardner ISDA**  
Resource Specialist  
CREP Leader  
Tippecanoe CREP



Follow us on Facebook for updates and events! [www.facebook.com/Marshallcountyswcd.org](https://www.facebook.com/Marshallcountyswcd.org)