

Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District News

2014 Annual Meeting Event



Thawing Your Turkey in the Toilet

A Humorous Look at the Life of a Purdue Extension Agent



Date/Time: Tuesday March 18 6p
Cost: Dinner and Speaker \$5
Place: Madison Cty 4H Building
RSVP: 765-644-4249 ext. 3
Pay at the door

Jonathan Ferris



You, your family and friends are invited to sit elbow to elbow with fellow soil and water conservationist such as yourself. Our speaker will fit right in as he tells us about his experience as a farm kid, extension agent, 4Her, fisherman and deer/turkey huntsman.

After you read his bio below you will understand why we chose him to entertain you for the evening.

Topics will include

- Humorous stories
- Soil and Water Conservation effects on Indiana's Wild Game
- His personal habitat improvement success
- Why after 100 years the Purdue Extension is still needed.
- Wild Game Processing Workshops

He has proven that if he can find conservation success than anyone can!

Make plans to join us by calling our office today!
765-644-4249 ext. 3

Jonathan is a native of Wayne County Indiana, where he grew up on his family's grain and hog farm. Jonathan received his undergraduate degree in Biology from Huntington College, and his Master's Degree in Fisheries & Wildlife from Michigan State University. He currently serves as an Extension Educator for both the 4-H Youth Development and Agriculture & Natural Resources programs in Wayne County. While in Extension, Jonathan has used his fisheries & wildlife background to co-develop a series of wild game processing workshops that he has conducted across the state for many years.

Jonathan and his family also own River's Edge Whitetails, LLC, a whitetail deer farm located in Milton, IN.

Jonathan and his wife Pasha have two great kids, Hunter & Morgan, who help around the farm and are both active in 4-H. In his spare time, Jonathan enjoys hunting deer & turkey, and spends as much time as he can each summer pursuing smallmouth bass in the river behind his home. Jonathan's family is blessed to have the ruins of 2 Whitewater Canal structures on his property, and regularly conducts tours for local groups.



Conservation Corner

By Chanda Hiatt

This winter has been a doozy! With all the snow days this year the kids and I have spent much needed extra time together. I was raised on the back of a snowmobile so I like snow. Based on Facebook postings it seems my attitude is the exception to the rule. My kids do not prefer taking care of the livestock in winters like these and the two hour delays are a frustration to my work schedule, but the snow days and extra naps that come with them are awesome! I mean who does not like an unexpected chance to take a nap? When I was a kid, some of the best naps I ever took happened on Saturday afternoons. I remember they usually started with me plopping on the couch with an attitude of boredom. My dad was usually watching Bob Vila repair an old farmhouse like ours on This Ole House. Dad would kick on the space heater and before long I was getting warm as a bug in a rug. That ole naptime feeling would seem to overtake us like an old welcomed friend. Norm Abram from the New Yankee Workshop lulled us into never never land with his New England accent. As a master woodworker you would think we could stay awake to see his finished product, but we struggled. I usually had fallen asleep by the end of that show. Those naps produced the kind of deep sleep where you wake and find you were drooling on your mother's homemade throw pillows. My naps seemed to be timed just right because I always woke to the sound of that mild mannered soft spoken voice. As a twelve year old country kid, I thought Bob Ross was a legend. There was never any background music, but in my mind I could hear John Denver singing "Take Me Home Country Roads" as Bob painted this perfect picture of nature. His paintings were places I instantly wanted to be and in his way, Bob Ross had the talent of taking 1000's of people to this place every Saturday afternoon. I can see him loading his palette with Cadmium Yellow, Titanium White, Dark Sienna, Midnight Black and Yellow Ochre paint. It amazed me how he would use the tool my dad used to smooth spackling to start the trunk of a tree. With a few more brush strokes he created what he called "Happy Little Trees". He placed them anywhere he deemed suitable in the landscape he dreamt up as he went along. As a child, I never questioned why he assumed all the trees he painted were happy. I believe we all accepted the fact that they were happy because he was that charismatic of a painter. I miss you Mr. Ross.

A few months ago, I pulled up a You Tube video of Bob Ross painting his happy trees for my daughter to watch. Up until now, she never understood why she repeatedly finds me inside Hobby Lobby gawking at the Bob Ross painting supplies. In my mind, I too should be able to paint happy trees. I have made a few attempts. My daughter stands back from the canvas and says "You are going to need lessons". I tell myself, if only I was as successful at painting trees as I am at planting real ones!

This past fall I chose to take down a row of dying Chinese Elm trees on the farm and replace them with a two row wind break. This is what I advise many of you to do on your properties and 2013 was my time to put my money where my mouth is. I learned a lot about measuring and placement and now I have 40 Norway and Serbian Spruce putting down roots in the soil that surrounds my farmhouse.



Side Note: Just for the record, no matter what my children may claim, I do not talk baby talk to my trees.

During the recent blizzard I looked out my kitchen window and I could see the ½ foot tops (leaders) of the evergreens popping out of the snow drifts. Somewhere underneath all that were my precious 2-3 foot darlings. The trees looked anything but happy. Poor things! Other than the snow drifts the trees are wrapped in, there is nothing protecting my baby trees from the west winds that whip across a 200 acre open field. I was worried about the success rate of the trees my kids and I had worked so hard to plant.

If you purchased and planted a tree last fall they are most likely covered in snow like mine. What makes a tree happy during these types of winter conditions? Alpha Nurseries out of Michigan informed me that last fall they planted 90,000 transplants and they will get a 90% success rate. How can they achieve that with harsh Michigan winters? One of the reasons is trees (especially evergreens) like to be covered in snow. That natural placed snow insulates them from harsh winds like a Carhartt coat insulates you in the barnyard.



Another added benefit to the large amounts of snow is eventually it melts and provides the roots nutrients they need to grow deeper. Deeper roots mean a good survivability rate. Our goal here at the SWCD is to not only educate you about trees in the hopes you will plant them, but we also want you to be successful. With all the extra snow this year, if you planted in the fall of 2013, you could not have picked a better winter to help them get started. Statistics say I may lose up to four of my baby evergreens. This may seem like a loss in most people's minds, but according to

the experts that loss would still spell success. I am breathing a whole lot easier after learning that all this extra snow covering my trees is exactly what they need to survive the record low temps and harsh winds.

We may not be painting happy little trees across the landscape of Madison County, but it seems over the past five years we have done something far better, we have planted 1000's of them. We as a team will be leaving a conservation heritage that will surpass anything that Bob Ross ever painted.

In the early summer be looking for your copy of our 2014 Fall Tree Sale brochure. If you do not receive one by July, please call our office 765-644-4249 ext. 3 and we will make sure you get a copy. We look forward to providing you a larger selection with great education to go with it! From my conservation corner to yours I wish you nothing but happy trees and long winter naps!



BRAG ALERT!

In the fall of 2009 we here at the SWCD held our first tree sale and sold a little over 3K in trees. Not too bad for a couple of newbie conservationist. I am more than **proud** to say five years later, we sold 35K in trees and wildlife plants at the 2013 Fall Tree Sale. We want to thank all of you that have purchased trees from us! Your word of mouth advertising is one of the reasons it has been such a success. We appreciate that!

SWCD Rentals



The No-Till Drill has three separate seed boxes. One seed box is for small seeds, one box is for larger seeds such as oats, rye, or various grasses and the third box is designed for large, fluffy seeds such as warm season grasses. It is the perfect tool to seed pastures, filter strips, winter cover crops, alfalfa, prairie plantings, and grassed waterways.

RATES:

\$10 / acre
 \$50 minimum
 \$25 delivery fee (Madison County)
 \$35 delivery fee (Adjacent Counties)
 \$75 charge for late return



We were granted funding by the Clean Water Indiana Program to purchase our tree planter. If you have tree seedlings to plant, consider renting our planter. If you have ever planted trees by hand, you will know how much work and back-ache our planter will save you! Reserve the tree planter today for your windbreak, wildlife habitat, or hardwood tree planting! In order to use the tree planter, you will need two people and a tractor with at least 75 horsepower. The tractor must have a 3-point hitch.

RATES:

40\$ / Day
 3 day maximum use limit
 \$25 delivery fee (Madison County)
 \$35 delivery fee (Adjacent Counties)
 \$75 charge for late return

Well Water Testing

What's in your water?



The Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to announce the 4th Annual WELL WATER INITIATIVE. According to the IDNR website there are 10, 732 wells in Madison County. If your drinking water comes from a well you are responsible for your water's safety. The government does not regulate or test private wells. Well water should be tested annually for bacteria and nitrates. The well water initiative is a program that is designed to help Madison County residents do just that at a reasonable

Why Test?

When you pour a glass of water, you expect it to be pure and safe. However, pure water rarely exists in nature. Water absorbs minerals, organic materials, and organisms as it moves through the air and soil into surface and ground water supplies. So, while most water appears clean and problem-free at the tap, it may not be safe for drinking or acceptable for household activities. Taste and odor are not always indicators of water quality. Contaminated water can taste and smell fine, while unpleasant-tasting or smelling water can be safe to drink or use.

If you are one of the 1.7 million private well owners in Indiana, you should know that you are responsible for monitoring the quality of your water. Testing will help confirm if a problem exists, or give you peace of mind when there are no problems with your water. If necessary, appropriate treatment will be recommended.

Source: Purdue Extension

Publication, WQ-4

Total coliform/E. coli - Bacteria often found in water and soil that indicate fecal pollution. Symptoms such as diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid fever, urinary tract infections, flu-like abdominal pain, etc. may be spread through fecal contaminated water.

Nitrate - Common sources of nitrate contamination include fertilizers, animal waste, septic tank run-off, and sewage run-off. Levels of nitrates exceeding 10 mg/L as nitrogen have been shown to cause methemoglobinemia in infants. This results in oxygen deprivation, which may be harmful to the developing nervous system of young children or could cause death by suffocation. Symptoms include chocolate colored blood, headache, flushing of the skin, vomiting, dizziness, marked fall of blood pressure, collapse, coma, and respiratory paralysis.

HOW DOES THE WELL WATER INITIATIVE WORK?

To get started you need a test kit!
Each test kit will test for both
Total Coliform and Nitrates.

\$35

Regular \$50

Special Note: If you are interested in other types of testing such as heavy metals, lead or others, they are available at an additional cost. Call our office for more information.

Once you purchase your test kit you will then be required to pull your water samples as directed and drop off your water samples to our office on

Tuesday April 29, 2014 from
7a-7p

Results are confidential and will be sent directly to you from Environmental Laboratories, Inc.

There are lots of ways to purchase a test kit. We will have them available at our office or they will be available at most all our events. We accept cash or check. If you have questions please call our office at 765-644-4249 ext 3.

Local Farmers Cashing in on Grants

By Steve Schmidt



For years, the Madison County SWCD has searched out grants to assist Madison County landowners in establishing various conservation practices on land in our county. In recent years, our office has secured grants for equipment modification for no-till farming to reduce nutrient and sediment runoff, GPS capabilities to reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides, tile and drainage repair to reduce sediment in Indiana's waters, exclusion fencing to keep livestock out of creeks and streams, and testing residential wells to verify a home has safe drinking water. Madison County has seen over \$100,000 from grants going toward land management practices in just the five years I have worked in the County. This year was no exception, as farmers were able to "cash in" on grants for various projects on their farms. I would like to explain three of our programs we have in Madison County and how the grant funds are used, as well as the benefits to our residents.

In January of 2013, along with Leslie White, Fall Creek Watershed Coordinator, we applied for cost share through the Upper White River Watershed Alliance's EPA 319 Grant to assist farmers in establishing cover crops on their fields for the winter. We were able to secure funding to allow 1,000 acres of cover crops in Madison and Hancock Counties. By providing a cost share program with a one year contract, we were able to help hesitant farmers make the "jump" and try it for themselves. As the fall rains came, so did the cover crops which helped to reduce runoff and erosion, decrease compaction, nitrogen and nutrient retention and even forage for livestock. In all, it has been a success leading into this cold winter and we hope to see positive results this spring during planting season.

For the third year, the Madison County SWCD partnered with the Delaware County SWCD for the On Farm Network. Two years ago, we applied for a Clean Water Indiana Grant and received funding for a three year study called the On Farm Network. This Midwest program is designed to show the effects of agriculture that contribute to hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico. Basically, we are testing the amount of nitrogen in a corn stalk, towards the end of the growing season, to determine if the farmer's nitrogen inputs were sufficient. In the first two years, we've seen many of our farmers pretty close to the required levels of application; however, we've also seen some inputting too much or too little nitrogen on their fields. Overall, Indiana compared above average to the numbers we've seen in other states.

2013 was the second year of the Fall Creek Watershed Partnership between Madison, Hamilton, Hancock and Marion Counties. This grant is different from most of the grants Madison County SWCD applied for in the past, as its focus was more on residential properties than the agricultural community. Using funds from the Clean Water Indiana Grant, the four counties were able to hire a full time Backyard Coordinator to promote backyard conservation. In January of 2012, Leslie White was hired to educate and promote anything and everything that involved conservation in a residential setting. This includes rain barrels and rain gardens, shoreline maintenance, wildlife habitat, bioswales, invasive plant control, native plantings, tree plantings, pervious pavement just to name a few. A second application was turned in for the Clean Water Indiana funds and cost share money was available to install some of these practices. Some residents took advantage during our 2013 Tree Sale and established wildlife habitat by planting native vegetation on their properties.



One of our favorite things to do at the SWCD office is to work with landowners on these cost share projects, as many landowners would not be able to establish these practices without financial assistance. Look for us to continually advertise grant opportunities in the future and come ask us about them. Unfortunately, most of the grants we work with are in a specified area, but that does not mean we will not work to try and find money and grants that will work for you.

It has been a fun and successful year and we look forward to 2014!



182 W 300 N
Anderson, In 46012



Check us out on
Facebook!

We are over 1000
friends strong!

Madison Cty SWCD



You teach your soil
how to treat you!



Soil Testing

What kind of relationship do you have with your dirt?

Wish you could find an affordable place to have your garden or yard soil tested. Do you feel like your soil doesn't listen to your needs? Have you considered the possibility you're not listening to the cries of attention your soil so desperately requires? Wish you had the information to make changes, so your plants and lawns are all they can be?

Know the health of your soil.

The Madison County Soil and Water Conservation offers two great tests at low prices everyone can afford!

Test #1 PH, (Buffer) PH, Potassium, Calcium, Magnesium, Zinc and Phosphorus **\$20**

Test #2 Micronutrients Boron, Copper, Iron and Manganese **\$25**

Directions

1. Purchase your soil test kits from our office 765-644-4249 ext 3
2. Return your test kit with soil sample to our office
3. Your soil testing results will be mailed to you!

