

AGENDA
STATE SOIL CONSERVATION BOARD MEETING

October 25, 2022

Indiana Soybean Alliance

MS Teams

- I. 9:30am: Call to Order**
- II. Approve Minutes of September 2022**
- III. Clean Water Indiana**
 - a. Clean Water Indiana Grants Committee
 - b. Annual Financial Reports- Leah Harmon
- IV. State Soil Conservation Board Business**
- V. Soil and Water Conservation Districts**
 - a. Temporary appointments
 - i. Dearborn SWCD- Tara Wessler-Henry
 - ii. Huntington SWCD- Geneva Tyler
- VI. ICP Reports**
 - a. ISDA
 - b. IASWCD
 - c. CCSI
 - d. Purdue
 - e. NRCS
 - f. FSA
 - g. IDEA
 - h. Other
- VII. Public Comment**
- VIII. 2023 Meeting Dates**
 - January 8, 3-5pm ET
 - March 21
 - May 16
 - July 18
 - September 19
 - October 24
- IX. Adjourn**

*****PLEASE NOTE*****

This agenda is in DRAFT FORM. Open Door Law does not prohibit the public agency from changing or adding to its agenda during the meeting.

MINUTES

STATE SOIL CONSERVATION BOARD MEETING

September 20, 2022

Indiana Farm Bureau Building
225 S East St, Indianapolis, IN 46202
MS Teams

Present

Kenny Cain (board member)
Larry Clemens (board member)
Amy Burris (board member)
Brad Dawson (board member)
Ray Chattin (board member)
Laura Fribley
Joe Schmees
Les Zimmerman
Trevor Laureys
Geneva Tyler
Nathan Stoelting
George Reger
Tara Wesseler-Henry

Present Virtually

Bob Eddleman (board member)
Jerry Raynor
Amy Work
Deb Barnett
Eric Shideler
Brandi Frazier
Leah Harmon
Julie Harrold
Sandra Hoffarth
Lisa Holscher
Heath Hurst
John Hazlett
Kelly Kent

Rebecca McClellan
Walt Sell
Jennifer Thum
William Ward
Judi Brown
Mary Lou Watson
Ken Gunkel
Amanda Robbins
Nelly Peffley

- I. 9:31 am: Call to Order** by Kenny.
- II. Approve Minutes of May & July 2022** Brad moved to approve April minutes. Second by Amy. Motion passed
- III. Clean Water Indiana**
- a. CWI Grant Modification Request-
 1. 2020 Vermillion- Nathan summarized grant modification for Vermillion/Parke. Amy moved to approve modification. Ray seconded. Motion passed.
 2. 2020 Warrick- Susan King summarized grant modification regarding a plan to possibly move funds in case current employee would find other employment. Ray moved to approve modification. Brad seconded. Motion carried.
 - b. Jerry Raynor was then given an opportunity to give NRCS updates ahead of schedule so that he could attend another meeting. He then gave his update. Ray asked follow up questions regarding capacity to handle the potential for available funds that may become available in the coming years. Jerry addressed the questions.
 - c. Tara was then asked to summarize CWI grant applications for 2023. These applications will be scored and brought to the board for funding recommendations at the October meeting.
- IV. State Soil Conservation Board Business**
- a. IASWCD Resolution- Trevor Laureys reported to the board on IASWCD resolution. Trevor gave the summary, and the board discussed the memo that was passed out. Bob Eddleman then announced his plan to resign from the board at the end of the year. Kenny then announced he would entertain a motion to accept the memorandum. Brad moved to accept the memo with grammar changes. Seconded by Amy. Motion passed.
 - b. Deadlines and Election Committee Policy- Geneva gave an update on deadlines and election committee policy. A committee has been formed and a meeting date will be set soon. Larry Clemens and Brad Dawson volunteered to sit on the committee as well.
 - c. FY23 Budget- Trevor gave an update on budget for 2023. Report was included in directors report. Ray then asked if there would be any consequences if SSCB would vote “no” to approve budget. Trevor then explained that budget could not be increased, but we do have wiggle room for moving into other areas

around the budget. Ray then asked if governor has approved this budget as the total dollars received from the state. Trevor answered this question. Ray then commented on a sub-committee meeting with the lieutenant governor and the request to increase total budget. Trevor explained that the budget being discussed was for a different fiscal year than the budget they were discussing at that meeting. Larry then asked about filling vacant positions with CWI dollars. Trevor then explained that those dollars would be taken from competitive grants, and he supports money getting into districts hands. The board expressed concern that this may limit our opportunity to receive some of the federal dollars that Jerry Raynor referenced in his update if we don't have the capacity to use that money. SSCB then discussed setting aside \$100,000 to hire positions needed to provide more technical assistance in the state. Ray then made a motion to amend budget to withhold \$100,000 from CWI grant money to be moved to salary funding. Kenny then asked if funds "leftover" could be used for this piece. Trevor explained that those dollars are already accounted for in the budget submitted. Larry seconded the motion. Larry then asked how fast these positions could be filled. Kenny asked what this staff position might look like. Trevor then explained his thoughts on what this might look like, that with additional funding the Division could explore hiring administrative support to assist with current grant administration as well as future grant administration. Trevor reminded the board that by approving this motion they are taking money from districts. The board discussed their hopes that by doing this they hope to eventually put more money in districts hands. Kenny then pointed out that he did not recognize Larry's second earlier and the original motion by Ray then died due to a lack of second. Discussion continued that perhaps \$150,000 could fund 2 staff positions, for the purpose of increasing the capacity of current staff to concentrate on securing additional grant dollars, which ultimately putting more conservation on the ground. Ray then made a motion that \$150,000 be withheld from CWI grant dollars to be directed to Division of Soil Conservation for the purpose of increasing capacity for pursuing grant opportunities. Larry seconded motion. Motion carried.

Trevor then asked for clarification of budget. Brad made a motion to approve budget with approved amendment. Ray seconded. Motion carried.

- d. FY23 Division Staffing Plan- Trevor gave an update on fiscal year 2023 division staffing plan.
- e. IDEA proposal- Kenny asked for an update on the IDEA CWI proposal. Eric Shidler provided that update. Kenny asked for any questions. Brad responded that he heard an update on this at July meeting and thought it was very well presented. Ray said he would agree with that. Then there was discussion on whether this should be scored with other applications or funded with CWI training dollars. Brad then asked Eric if the program would be available for all district staff or just IDEA members. Eric said that would not be a restriction in this program. The only restriction would be that it would be available only to employees in their first 1-3 years of employment. Ray then responded that he thought using training dollars might be a good way to fund this proposal. He then made a motion to use the \$5,000 from CWI training dollars to fund the IDEA proposal. Larry seconded. Kenny then asked for any discussion. Tara then gave details on the contracting details regarding this motion. Motion approved.

V. Break

VI. Soil and Water Conservation Districts

- a. Temporary appointments
Kenny asked for a summary of Cass County supervisor change. Geneva provided that update and the change requested.
Kenny then asked for an update on Fayette SWCD supervisor change. Tara provided that update. She also provided details for two supervisor changes in Ohio County. Documentation and details were provided for all three supervisor changes.
Geneva then shared that Tipton County had a late request for a change in supervisor. Geneva provided the details on this change as well
Amy made a motion to approve all supervisor temporary recommendations. Seconded by Brad. Motion carried.

VII. ICP Reports

- a. ISDA- George Reger gave an ISDA update for work completed this summer.

Julie then gave a report on CREP. She provided update on numbers and acres added to program for this past year. Current contracts for administration counties will expire this year. New contracts will be made up by the end of December. She also gave details on gulf hypoxia work plan that was approved by EPA.

Jennifer Thum then provided an update on current federal grant projects.

Laura then provided a summary of the DSS report. Laura explained that we have some leftover funds from the old LI program. Those funds can be used for trainings with similar purposes in the future. Brad asked about the number of trainings that might be able to be provided with funds available. Laura explained that it would be dependent on cost of those trainings and more details will be discussed and planned.

- b. IASWCD- Joe Schmees provided an update for the IASWCD. Les Zimmerman also provided an update as the legislative chairman of IASWCD. Les provided details on a funding initiative. He provided documents on the details of the proposal they have presented to Indiana legislators. Ray then advocated for the extra budget dollars being requested by the IASWCD. Amy asked about CWI being the “vehicle” to deliver funds to districts. Discussion was held regarding Minnesota funding to districts. Joe broke down what recommendations could be made with these additional appropriations.
- c. FSA- Julia Wickard of FSA then gave an update for Farm Service Agency. She introduced other FSA staff that was with her and provided what changes FSA are dealing with right now.
- d. CCSI- Lisa Holscher gave updates for CCSI. New training this summer with Byron Seeds. Many of these trainings were attended very well by the Amish community.
- e. Purdue- Purdue updates were provided virtually by Walt Sell. He provided details on Ag Informatics Labs. He provided more details on this with a document on the program. Link for that documentation was provided in the chat for the online meeting option.
- f. IDEA- IDEA report was provided by Eric Shideler. He mentioned new staff currently joining the state as we have seen a high rate of staff turnover recently. Also provided details on upcoming IDEA fall conference and agenda topics.

VIII. Public Comment & October Meeting Date- Kenny then asked for any additional comments and questions. Hearing none, Amy then asked for next meeting dates. Next meeting date is October 25. Meeting location is TBD.

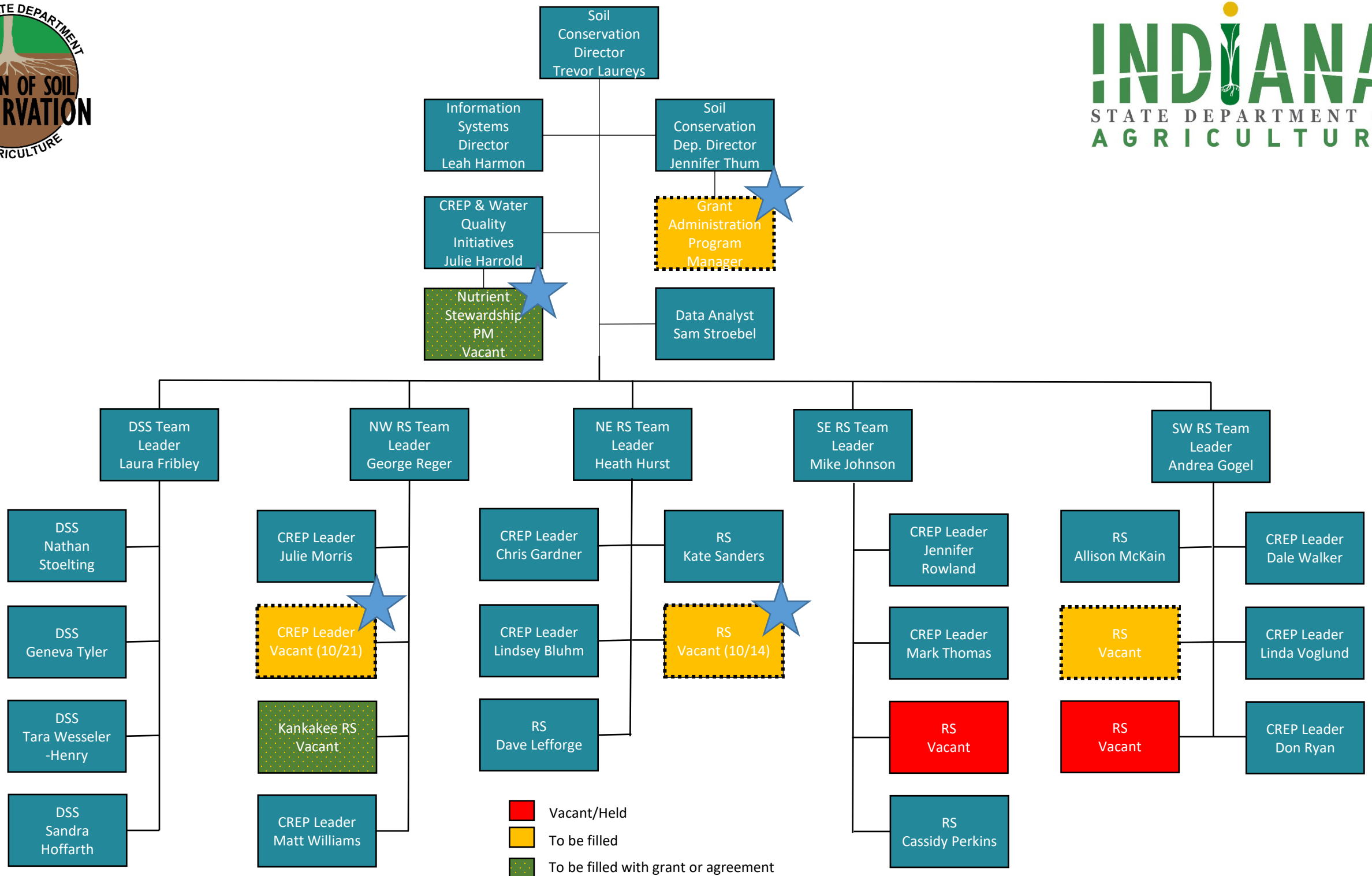
IX. Adjourn- Brad moved to adjourn. Amy seconded. Meeting adjourned at 12:09pm.

Having recently talked to Ken Gunkel, President, Dearborn County SWCD, I am tendering my resignation as Supervisor of Dearborn County SWCD effectively today. Due to a medical situation, I will not be able to fulfil my responsibilities as a Supervisor however, I do ask to be an Associate Supervisor for the Dearborn County SWCD.

To Beth, thank you and all the members of the Dearborn County SWCD team for all that you do.

Thank you,

Patrick Holland





JOB DESCRIPTION

State Form 52468 (12-05)

This document is used to provide a basic description of essential duties and other work elements.

Employee Name: VACANT	
Agency: Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA)	BU: 036
Division: Division of Soil Conservation	Section/District: Indianapolis
Job Title: Program Director 1	Job Code: 002WM1
Working Title (if different from above): Training & Grant Coordinator	
Reports To: ISDA Deputy Director, Division of Soil Conservation	
FLSA Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Exempt (OT Eligible) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exempt	Effective Date: 10/XX/2022

Purpose of Position/Summary:

Responsible for administrative support through grant administration, data management, training program leadership, strategic input, and implementation to support operational success of Division programs. The incumbent shall advance environmental stewardship and soil health efforts throughout the state by engaging directly with agricultural leaders to ensure that Indiana agriculture is adequately addressing challenges and opportunities beyond traditional efforts; such as cost-share incentives and workforce preparedness.

Essential Duties/Responsibilities:

- Actively seek new funding opportunities and partnerships that will promote the work of ISDA's Division of Soil Conservation and partners.
- Support Division of Soil Conservation Deputy Director with the planning, research, and preparation of grant proposals, including text, budgets, and linkage to expected conservation outcomes.
- Develop an on-demand training program for Indiana Conservation Partnership staff while utilizing existing partner and division training resources.
- Assist the Deputy Director with current and future grant proposals or agreements.
- Plan education and technical workshops related to current and future grant agreements.
- Work closely with Indiana Conservation Partnership to identify and facilitate training for new and existing employees throughout the state.
- Maintain and update Indiana Conservation Partnership training catalogue and calendars.
- Collaborate with Division's District Support Specialists to promote division trainings to ICP staff.
- Support existing processor sustainability programs such as the Red Gold Stewardship Program.
- Work closely with Division programs to capture and promote program highlights, including creation of computerized summaries and graphics.
- Create and distribute reports, summaries and analyses, and prepare presentation of data for a timely response to requests for information and for meetings and speaking engagements.
- Coordinate the planning and preparation of Division grant proposals and monitoring of post-awards with the Grant Services Division.
- Other duties as assigned.

Job Requirements:

- Bachelor of Science degree from an accredited university or college in physical or earth sciences, natural resources, biology, or agriculture. Three years of applicable work experience may substitute for the required degree.

- Advanced knowledge of soil and water conservation theories, principles, techniques, and practices, and expertise in the design, application, installation, and maintenance of those practices.
- Broad knowledge of agriculture.
- Working knowledge of the agency and of state and federal agencies dealing with the programs.
- Some knowledge of project management and/or event management.
- Able to comprehend, analyze and interpret material and make recommendation on implementation on current programs.
- Able to consider long-term goals and direction, implementing strategies to reach those goals.
- Ability to develop and maintain effective working relationships.
- Able to monitor and track various metrics.
- Attention to detail in reporting and documentation.
- Able to communicate orally, digitally and in writing.
- Able to work under multiple deadlines.
- Skilled in Microsoft Office Suite.
- Valid drivers license.

Supervisory Responsibilities/Direct Reports:

No supervisory responsibilities. Reports directly to ISDA's Division of Soil Conservation Deputy Director.

Difficulty of Work:

The work is broad in scope involving involving complex program and culture sensitivities which require critical and administrative analytical abilities. Work is highly variable and requires a great deal of critical thinking, planning, and relationship- building to be successful. The incumbent applies communication, technical, and coordination skills to ensure that Indiana agricultural producers are given the best opportunities to enhance the stewardship of the land and water resources.

Responsibility:

The incumbent makes a substantial contribution in the development and implementation of significant programs. Incumbent works independently and possesses sufficient technical authority and judgement for the work. Decisions may impact internal and external partnership development, customer relations, business development opportunities and funding opportunities. Decisions and major recommendations are reviewed for compliance with agency policy and to ensure resources are prioritized based on the strategic objectives of the organization.

Personal Work Relationships:

Maintaining and developing work relationships is extremely important in this position. Working closely with associates within and outside of the organization will be required daily. The incumbent works collaboratively across the agency and with external partners such as the Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI), USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Purdue University Extension, Indiana's Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Indiana Ag Nutrient Alliance, and others.

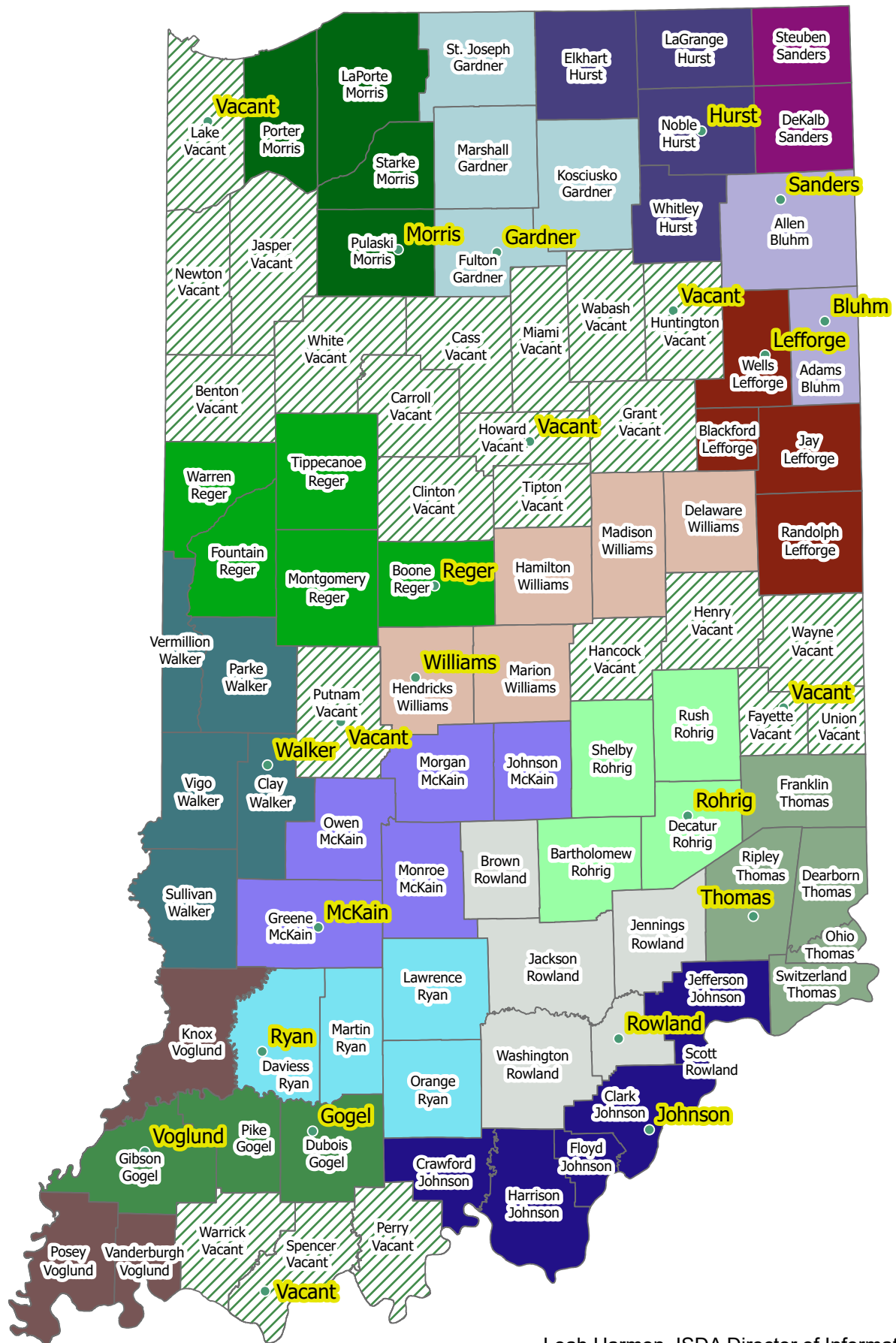
Physical Effort:

This position will require mobility, including travel to local and regional locations. Speaking and hearing are also required. The ability to input data and transfer data is also required. The ability to lift up to forty pounds is also required. Field observations, trainings, and visits can involve extensive walking and carrying of equipment.

Working Conditions:

The work environment for this position will predominately occur in an office setting, however some remote work is possible under existing remote policy. Some travel will be required, and some overnight stays may be likely. Incumbent must work in an office setting as well as outdoors in various weather and terrain conditions.

Resource Specialist Regions & Vacancies





State Soil Conservation Board

ISDA – DSC Director’s Report

October 25, 2022

Budget & Staffing

CWI FY23

Reference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beVaLLjszUk>

- The SSCB met on September 20th to vote on CWI FY23
- The board voted to hold back \$150,000 from the CWI competitive grant program to assist with staffing at the Division of Soil Conservation.
 - It was asked that the individual(s) hired with these dollars support SWCDs through future grant funded initiatives
 - I’ve provided a DRAFT job description today
- The board voted to continue funding the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) with a traditional \$660,000
- Today we will discuss the decisions of the SSCB Grants Committee for CWI Competitive

CWI FY24

- Agency ask is (#1) to regain 2020 funding levels prior to the 15% loss during COVID, and (#4) a \$920,000 ask to double the AFR for SWCDs.
- Currently, I have no further updates to the legislative session or State Biennium budget FY24 or FY25.
 - Governor’s Budget typically released in January ahead of session
 - If one is interested in following the process can find info about here: <https://www.in.gov/sba/budget-committee/>

State Personnel Department Compensation Study

- The Indiana State Personnel Department began a compensation study in October 2021. This effort is part of Governor Holcomb’s NextLevel State Work Initiative. You may find the report here: <https://www.in.gov/spd/files/comp-study-report.pdf>
- Ultimately, ISDA was included in this study and subsequent changes to compensation and job classification.
 - This led to significant compensation changes across our agency to adjust and make pay more competitive at the state level.
 - These adjustments are not taken out of our current budget/are considered new dollars.

Staffing

- Departure of a several Resource Specialists in the past few months
 - Amy Sims in the SW
 - Katie Secrest in the NE (**Post next week**)
 - Austin Green in the central NW (CREP Leader) (**Post next week**)
- Position funded via Gulf Hypoxia Program (EPA) will be posted **within two weeks** as “Nutrient Stewardship Program Manager”
- Position from \$150,000 held back by SSCB – indicated we would have a Job Description (JD) by today (note this is a DRAFT)
 - Position would support our Deputy Director in existing grants and pursuing new grants
 - Position would compliment the great work done by partners in efforts to provide on-demand training for new SWCD and ICP employees

Clean Water Indiana (simply for reference if there is discussion):

Clean Water Indiana	FY21	Carryover	FY22	Carryover	FY23
General Fund	\$970,000		\$970,000		\$970,000
Cigarette Tax	\$2,963,546	\$466,408	\$2,519,014	\$474,974	\$2,519,014
Total	\$3,933,546		\$3,489,014		\$3,489,014
Earmarked CWI FY22	\$0		\$0		\$130,000
Total + Carryover	\$3,933,546		\$3,955,422		\$3,833,988
Difference			-\$21,876		-\$121,434

- Carryover from FY22 to FY23 consists of DSC Dedicated, Remaining CWI, and an ISDA investment

Division of Soil Conservation:

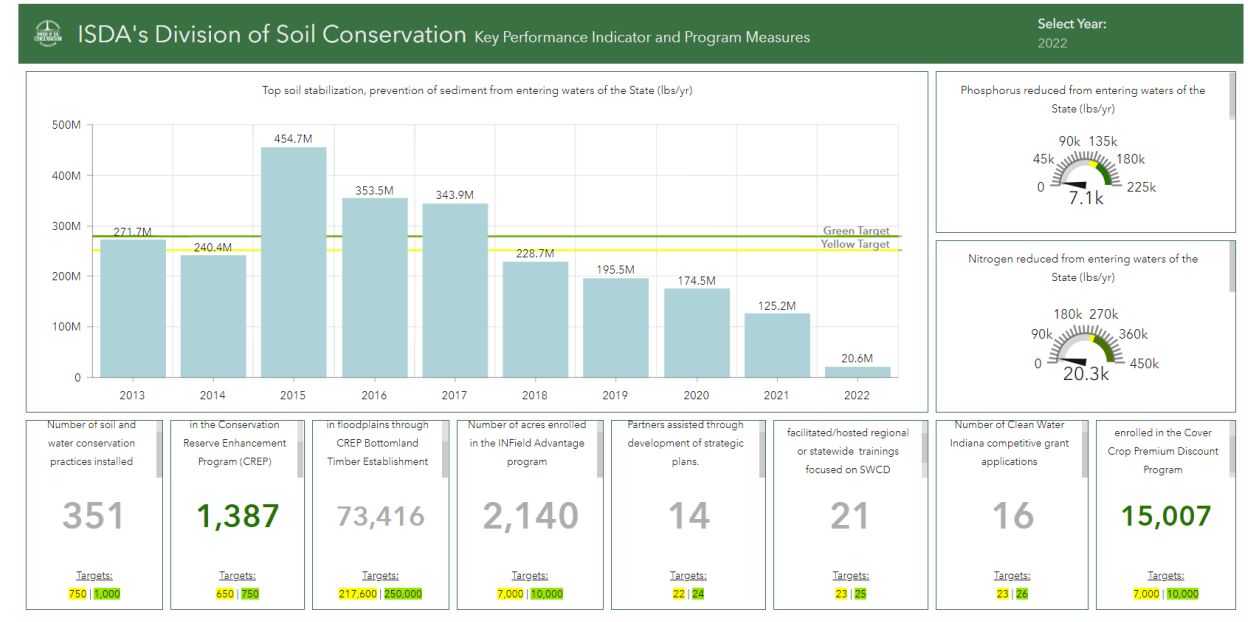
DSC Dedicated Funds	FY21		FY22		FY23
Dedicated Funds	1,418,471		1,205,700		1,205,700
Total	1,418,471		1,205,700		1,205,700
Difference			\$212,771		\$0

SSCB Member Terms

- Per IN Code 14-32-2-3 Qualifications of members
 - Sec. 3. (a) A majority of the seven (7) appointed members of the board must have experience as district supervisors. (b) In making appointments to the board, the governor may invite and consider the recommendations of the following:
 - (1) The Purdue University cooperative extension service.
 - (2) The Indiana state department of agriculture.
 - (3) The Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation District
 - (c) All appointments to the board shall be made without regard to political affiliation.
 - (d) The members appointed to the board under section 2(1) and 2(2) of this chapter must be residents of at least four (4) different geographic regions of Indiana.

Note: Up for reappointment 1/1/2023: Amy Burris, Ray Chattin, Bob Eddleman

Division of Soil Conservation Key Performance Indicator & Program Measures



Tyler, Geneva (ISDA)

From: Microsoft Power Apps and Power Automate <microsoft@powerapps.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 19, 2022 1:53 PM
To: Harmon, Leah; Tyler, Geneva (ISDA)
Subject: Update: Dearborn Temp/Vacant Appt

**** This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email. ****

DearbornSWCD has submitted a Recommendation for Temporary or Vacant Appointment. Please add it to the next SSCB agenda.

SWCD
Dearborn
Appointment Type
Temporary_Elected_Position
Who is the Candidate Replacing?
Pat Holland
Term Expiration
2025
Reason for Vacancy
Resignation
Supervisor Candidate Name
Matthew Johnson
Address
228622 Burezelbach Rd
City, State, ZIP
Guilford, IN 47011
Qualifications
High School Graduate, Own own business, interested in Soil and Water, Is a Conservationist, and does Forest Management Projects
Occupation
Owner of Dynamic Land Enhancements

Conservation Interests

Forest Management Projects, Conservation

The candidate has been informed of the dual office holding policy and certifies that they do not hold a public office.

Yes

The candidate is of legal voting age.

Yes

The duties of the office of supervisor has been explained to the candidate.

Yes

Chairman Name

Ken Gunkel

Date of Submission

10/19/2022

Is a letter of resignation attached?

Yes

If you want to unsubscribe from these emails, please use this [form](#).

Tyler, Geneva (ISDA)

From: Microsoft Power Apps and Power Automate <microsoft@powerapps.com>
Sent: Friday, October 21, 2022 8:21 AM
To: Harmon, Leah; Tyler, Geneva (ISDA)
Subject: Update: Huntington Temp/Vacant Appt

**** This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email. ****

HuntingtonSWCD has submitted a Recommendation for Temporary or Vacant Appointment. Please add it to the next SSCB agenda.

SWCD
Huntington
Appointment Type
Vacant_Appointed_Position
Who is the Candidate Replacing?
Andrew Ambriole
Term Expiration
2023
Reason for Vacancy
Resignation
Supervisor Candidate Name
Kyle Lund
Address
604 N 500 E
City, State, ZIP
Markle, IN 46770
Qualifications
served on SWCD board for 30 years, member of Upper Wabash River Basin Commission
Occupation
farmer

Conservation Interests

precision application,

The candidate has been informed of the dual office holding policy and certifies that they do not hold a public office.

Yes

The candidate is of legal voting age.

Yes

The duties of the office of supervisor has been explained to the candidate.

Yes

Chairman Name

Adam Couch

Date of Submission

10/21/2022

Is a letter of resignation attached?

No

If you want to unsubscribe from these emails, please use this [form](#).



State Soil Conservation Board
October 25, 2022
District Support Specialist (DSS) Report: 8/30/22 to 10/10/22



Statewide or Regional Trainings for SWCD Supervisors and Staff

- Completed since last report:
 - August 31: Laura hosted a regional staff meeting
 - October 4: Nathan hosted a regional staff meeting
 - August 31: District Summer Meeting. This was the last of the four statewide meetings.
 - September 6: Laura hosted a regional staff meeting
 - September 14: Geneva hosted a regional staff meeting
- “Board Certification Program”: ISDA and IASWCD continued discussions on developing training materials for Supervisors. On September 29, Kris Vance (NRCS) facilitated a session where we narrowed down specific topics that fell under the larger training categories of Supervisor Responsibilities, Leadership, District Operations, and Election/Recruitment.

Clean Water Indiana:

- Grant Reviews completed: Grant
- ISDA DSSs and RSs assisted applicants with the 2023 Competitive Grant process. A total of 16 applications were received for the September 8 deadline.
- DSSs and RSs continue to assist current grantees as well. The next deadline for Grant Updates in January 31.

Committee Work: DSSs participated in work, discussions, etc. tying to the following statewide or regional initiatives-

- Women4The Land
- Pathway to Water Quality
- ICP Training and Certification Program
- Board Certification Program
- Annual Financial Report

DSS Activities Statewide For This Reporting Period	Total
Input, Assistance & Attendance At SWCD Board Meetings	14
Visits With SWCD Supervisors/Staff For Training, Assistance, Guidance, CWI, etc.	42
Assistance With SWCD or Partner Strategic Planning	3



**Indiana Association of
Soil and Water
Conservation Districts**

Protecting and enhancing Indiana's soil
and water resources for all Hoosiers



IASWCD

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PRESIDENT:

Bobby Hettmansperger
Wabash County

VICE PRESIDENT:

Jeff Baker
Warrick County

TREASURER:

Sarah Delbecq
DeKalb County

SECRETARY:

Marc Roberts
Montgomery County

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Joe Schmees
joseph-schmees@iaswcd.org

To: State Soil Conservation Board

Date: Tuesday, October 25, 2022

Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)

- The CCSI Oversight Committee has rescheduled the CCSI Strategic Planning meeting for the end of November. Refer to the separate CCSI report for more.

Urban Soil Health Program (USHP)

- Staff continue to collaborate with districts on developing working groups and holding events. Staff have participated in 23 district board meetings this calendar year, and 11 new working groups have been established. Staff worked with NRCS and partners to develop new training for ICP staff.

Legislative Issues

- Four resolutions were submitted to be considered at the IASWCD Business meeting in January, and will be sent out to Districts at the beginning of November.
- IASWCD continues to work with SICIM on a CWI Campaign for the 2023 budget session in the IN General Assembly. IASWCD legislative committee members have been meeting with legislators and are targeting financial committee members in the House and Senate.
- The Wetlands Taskforce submitted a final report to the IN Legislature at the end of September that held many useful recommendations for future policy making regarding wetlands.

Other

- Districts Showcase award winners have been chosen, and the visits scheduled for Gibson SWCD (11/14), Hendricks SWCD (11/7), Miami SWCD (11/2), and Warrick SWCD (11/4). We would like to have a representative from all of the ICP partners be able to attend each presentation, and invite all SSCB members.
- IASWCD Board meetings for the remainder of this year are November 18 and December 16.
- The SWCD Annual Conference will be held January 8-10, 2023, at the Westin in Indianapolis. Registration is now live, with early bird rates available through November 16. The agenda and breakout/roundtable topics are available. All info is available on our conference registration webpage: <https://web.cvent.com/event/eda64081-1d5c-45d0-a84b-2b7966db1a07/summary>.
- IASWCD has set aside Sunday evening at the Annual SWCD Conference for the SSCB Meeting, and has scheduled a SSCB/CWI Roundtable for the first day of conference.

THE IASWCD MISSION *is to enable the conservation of natural resources of Indiana.*

Indiana NRCS State Conservationist Report

October 2022 State Soil Conservation Board Meeting

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM – WETLAND RESERVE EASEMENTS

General Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) applications are being accepted and the sign-up ranking date for FY23 funding will be November 15, 2022. The easement rates have doubled or almost tripled in some areas, and all interested landowners should be made aware of the increased rates ([see map](#)). Interested landowners need to complete an application and provide deeds for the property as a first step. Basic eligibility for WRE includes 24-month ownership, at least 50% hydric or flooded soils, and at least half of the area in cropping or with a history of cropping.

ACEP-Wetland Reserve Easements in the Western Lake Erie Basin: There is \$350,000 of targeted WRE funding for Indiana counties in the Western Lake Erie Basin including parts of Adams, Wells, Allen, DeKalb, Noble and Steuben counties through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). Eligible entities in the Western Lake Erie Basin must submit applications for GLRI-WRE's current funding pool on or before November 15.

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM – AGRICULTURAL LAND EASEMENTS

Agricultural Land Easement applications are being accepted and the sign-up ranking date for FY23 funding will be January 17, 2023. Agricultural easements not only protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses, they also support environmental quality, wildlife habitat, historic preservation and protection of open spaces. State and local governments, non-governmental organizations and Native American Tribes that have farmland or grassland protection programs are eligible to partner with NRCS and individual landowners to protect farmland through easements. Under the Agricultural Land component, NRCS may contribute up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement. Where NRCS determines that grasslands of special environmental significance will be protected, NRCS may contribute up to 75 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement.

WETLAND RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PARTNERSHIP

NRCS in Indiana is investing up to \$3.5 million in a Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP) project, led by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), to bring together partners and landowners to voluntarily return critical wetland functions to agricultural landscapes. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis, but they must be received on or before November 15 for the FY23 funding period.

The Lower Wabash River and White River Oxbow project, led by TNC, seeks to enroll 1,000 acres into wetland easements in parts of Knox, Gibson and Posey counties in Indiana and Gallatin, White, Edwards and Wabash counties in Illinois. This project aims to build on existing efforts of local partnerships between NRCS, TNC and the Conservation Law Center to enroll all eligible landowners in Indiana and Illinois, with an emphasis on historically underserved farmers. Eligible landowners include owners of privately held land including land that is held by tribes and tribal members.

RCPP-CCA GRANTS FOR NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

NRCS is announcing the availability of Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) funding for eligible applicants to co-invest in impactful and innovative solutions to on-farm, watershed and regional natural resource concerns. For the 2022 application period, applications will be accepted from eligible entities for projects impacting nutrient management in NRCS RCPP Critical Conservation

Areas (CCAs). CCA areas in Indiana include the Mississippi River Basin and Great Lakes Region. Only land management and rental activities are eligible.

NRCS seeks RCPP applications that help producers achieve conservation benefits through more efficient nutrient management. Nutrient management activities are eligible under CCA water quality priority resource concerns. It is anticipated that successful project proposals will demonstrate familiarity with the NRCS 590 Nutrient Management practice standard and associated practice standards that impact nutrient management. The Federal funding agency expects to award up to \$40 million through this opportunity and make up to seven awards under this announcement. Projects may be up to five years in duration, however in special circumstances the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture may approve shorter or longer projects. NRCS gives priority consideration to RCPP proposals that propose meaningful and measurable engagement with and benefit to [historically underserved \(HU\)](#) farmers, ranchers and landowners. HU producers may be eligible for special incentives to encourage their participation in RCPP projects. Applicants must submit their applications through [Grants.gov](#) by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on October 31, 2022.

PEOPLE'S GARDEN INITIATIVE

USDA is expanding its People's Garden Initiative to include additional eligible gardens nationwide. School gardens, community gardens, urban farms, and small-scale agriculture projects in rural, suburban and urban areas can be recognized as a "People's Garden" if they register on the USDA website and meet the criteria including benefitting the community, working collaboratively, incorporating conservation practices and educating the public. Affiliate People's Garden locations will be indicated on a map on the USDA website, featured in USDA communications and provided with a People's Garden sign.

To be eligible, gardens must:

- Benefit the community by providing food, green space, wildlife habitat, education space.
- Be a collaborative effort. This can include groups working together with USDA agencies, food banks, after school programs, Girl Scouts, Master Gardeners, conservation districts, etc.
- Incorporate conservation management practices, such as using native plant species, rain barrels, integrated pest management, xeriscaping.
- Educate the public about sustainable gardening practices and the importance of local, diverse, and resilient food systems providing healthy food for the community.

To learn more about People's Garden or to register one, visit the People's Garden webpage at <https://www.usda.gov/peoples-garden>.

INDIANA NRCS STAFFING UPDATE

The Indiana NRCS team is constantly expanding as we work to help farmers and landowners throughout the state help the land. We are working to post announcements on USAJobs for the 30 vacancies throughout the state, including nine district conservationist positions. We are in the process of filling 11 positions for which the announcements have already closed including four new planning team leaders, two area conservationists and an urban conservationist. We will also soon be announcing our 2023 Pathway Internship openings and a recent graduate position in Rensselaer.

INDIANA NRCS PROGRAM FUNDING UPDATE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is under a continuing resolution until Dec. 16 and is still awaiting guidance on Fiscal Year 2023 program funding allotments.

INDIANA NRCS PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Indiana continues to leverage partnerships throughout the state to help people help the land. There are currently 46 active agreements between Indiana NRCS and partners totaling \$25,586,493 in federal funds and \$14,768,631 of partner funding being invested in conservation.

CURRENT COVID PROTOCOL

CDC has made a fundamental shift from managing infection to managing severe disease. Agencies will stop routine testing programs that are based on vaccination status. This means that FPAC will not implement a screening testing program.

All safety protocols will be the same for employees/partners regardless of their vaccination status. Agencies will stop requiring proof of vaccination and collecting vaccine information of employees, contractors and visitors. Currently, vaccinated employees/partners who are exposed to COVID-19 need to monitor for symptoms but are not required to quarantine.

1. Please suspend asking employees, onsite contractor employees, visitors to Federal facilities, or in-person attendees at agency-hosted meetings, events, and conferences to provide information about their COVID-19 vaccination status, regardless of COVID-19 Community Levels.
2. Employees who are not fully vaccinated will follow the same guidance as fully vaccinated. There will no longer be any differentiation between vaccinated and unvaccinated.

Other safety protocols remain the same including, FPAC staffing requirement and masking requirements based on Community Levels. As a reminder, in counties where the COVID Community Level is HIGH, masks are required to be worn in facilities as well as in government vehicles with multiple occupants.

The biggest difference will be a change in quarantine rules for those who are exposed but not symptomatic. Those employees should now mask, but NOT quarantine. Regardless of vaccination status you are only required to quarantine if you have symptoms or have tested positive. If you were exposed but do not have symptoms or a positive test, instead of quarantining you should wear a high-quality mask for 10 days and get tested on day 5. If you have symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, you should stay home for at least 5 days

There is currently no change to how FPAC is handling staffing, travel or large events.