

Chapter 15: Contests and Special Awards

This chapter highlights only current statewide contests and awards. A number of district may be participating in other contests and award programs not highlighted in this chapter.

Sec. 1 Conservation Farmer-Of-The-Year Award

Indiana Prairie Farmer and Indiana Farm Bureau, Inc. sponsor this award in cooperation with IASWCD. This program recognizes top conservation farmers in the state.

The Conservation Farmer-of-the-Year Award program is open to all farmers who have a soil and water conservation plan. Past state winners are not eligible to compete. The form may be located at: http://www.iaswcd.org/district_tools/applications.html .

Any active farmer or landowner in Indiana is eligible to be recognized for the award. Preference also will be shown to applicants who demonstrate that they earn at least 50 percent of their income by farming or from the farm. Judges will evaluate each applicant's overall conservation efforts on his/her own farm. They will pay special attention to how well the practices chosen and applied over the years fit the particular needs of that farm. Involvement in soil conservation activities and other agricultural groups will also be considered in determining the state winners.

Each county SWCD may submit one application for consideration as a state winner. If the county SWCD awards a local Conservation Farmer (or Cooperator) of the Year award at their annual meeting, we encourage this applicant to be submitted for consideration as a state winner. If there is a regional competition, a county SWCD is required to score the application turned into the IASWCD for consideration. This is helpful to the District if you have more than one applicant (the highest point recipient will be the applicant to submit for the state award). Applications that are not scored at the District level will not be considered for the state award. Support material is required. Scrapbooks or farm plans must be mailed separately via U.S. mail (or delivered) to the IASWCD.

Sec. 2 Master Farm Conservationist Award

Note: this was last awarded in 2009 and has been discontinued. For two decades, the award recognized Hoosiers who devoted a lifetime to conservation work on their farm, but who had not been recognized in other ways. There is a provision in the Conservation Farmer of the Year award to present a career award.

IASWCD, Indiana Prairie Farmer, and Indiana Farm Bureau will now co-sponsor the Conservation Farmer of the Year contest. Many of these people have also practiced conservation techniques for a lifetime, but some are relative newcomers to conservation farming. If you thought someone would make a good Master Farm Conservationist, they

likely will also be an excellent candidate for the Master Farmer award. Consider nominating them for this honor instead.

Sec. 3 River Friendly Farmer Award

Since 1999, key conservation and agricultural organizations have sponsored the River Friendly Farmer (RFF) Program. The statewide initiative recognizes farmers, who through good production management practices helps keep Indiana's rivers, lakes and streams clean. Award sponsors include IASWCD, the state's 92 county SWCDs, Indiana Farm Bureau, Inc., and the Indiana State Department of Agriculture.

Annually, each county SWCD may nominate up to two farmers who do an outstanding job of protecting their rivers, lakes and streams through their every day conservation management practices on the farm.

The award publically recognizes farmers and strives to protect and improve our soil, water and related natural resources. The award is also an opportunity to talk about what these farmers do on their farms to improve water quality, how they promote farming, stewardship and conservation practices in their county and watershed. More information can be found at: http://www.iaswcd.org/district_tools/applications.html

Award recipients are recognized at the state River Friendly Farmer ceremonies at the Indiana State Fair, as well as through state agricultural newspapers, radio, and related sources. Winners also receive a sign to post on their property.

Sec. 4 Indiana Envirothon

The Envirothon is a competitive learning event for high school-aged students to test their knowledge of environmental resources, including: soils/land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife and a current environmental issues.

Teams of five students, representing a school or organization, compete by answering questions and by studying resource problems in each of the five environmental areas. Before the competition, students study, with their advisors, to develop a greater understanding the environment. At the Envirothon competition, students test their knowledge under the supervision of environmental instructors. Students use teamwork to develop creative solutions to environmental problems.

Before competitions, students spend time researching and studying under the supervision of a team advisor, to develop a greater understanding of the interaction between humans and the environment.

Teams begin competition at the regional level, usually held in March or April. After interaction with a natural resource professional in each of the five envirothon parameters, teams take written tests in each of these areas. The top three teams from each regional contest earn a place at the state competition.

The Indiana Envirothon is coordinated by a state steering committee, with its own officers and by-laws. The Indiana Envirothon is sponsored by the IASWCD, IASWCD Auxiliary, Indiana District Employees' Association, Soil and Water Conservation Society, Hoosier Chapter, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indiana Department of Education, Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service, Indiana Farm Bureau Inc., The Hoosier National Forest, and other local sponsors.

Sec. 5 Friend of Conservation Award

The IASWCD Friend of Conservation Award recognizes individuals and organizations that have made an outstanding contribution to soil and water conservation in Indiana. Up to five individuals, businesses, or organizations may be honored next year at the January Annual Conference's Indiana Conservation Awards banquet.

Nominees for the Friend of Conservation Award must have made a positive contribution to soil and water conservation through their public conservation education/outreach programs. Conservation programs or projects may be local, regional or statewide in nature and may be a single project/program or for contributions to multiple projects/programs over time. Measurable results are important and must be detailed in the application.

For more information, please visit:

http://www.iaswcd.org/district_tools/applications.html

Sec. 6 Supervisor of the Year Award

This award honors SWCD supervisors for their outstanding and exemplary achievements and leadership in the protection and enhancement of Indiana's soil and water resources. An overall state winner will be recognized at the Annual Conference of Indiana SWCDs Conservation Award Banquet in January.

Any current District supervisor serving on an Indiana SWCD Board is eligible for nomination. IASWCD officers and region directors are NOT eligible. Nominations may be made by any individual, organization, agency or conservation partner. Individuals will be evaluated and selected on a regional basis. Each region winner will then be judged for the overall state Supervisor of the Year Award. More information:

http://www.iaswcd.org/district_tools/applications.html .

Sec. 7 District Showcase Award

The District Showcase Award highlights the successes of up to four local Indiana SWCDs. The winners will be recognized at the Annual Conference of Indiana SWCDs Conservation Award Banquet in January. More information:

http://www.iaswcd.org/district_tools/applications.html

Sec. 8 NACD Poster Contest

The National Conservation Poster Contest is open to kindergarten through twelfth grade students. The contest is open to public, private or home school students. Artwork entered into the national competition must have been judged in a local or area conservation district sponsored poster contest and a state conservation association or state auxiliary sponsored contest.

There will be judging at the national level for all categories. The state conservation association or auxiliary selects a poster for entering in each of the grade divisions or special category and submits it to NACD. State entries are due to IASWCD. For more information, please visit: http://www.iaswcd.org/district_tools/nacdcontest.html .

Sec. 9 IDEA Star Award

The Indiana District Employees Association (IDEA) Star Award recognizes up to eight outstanding SWCD staff. They are nominated for the excellent job they do providing conservation resources and services to landowners and other constituents. For more information, please contact IDEA: <http://in.ncdea.org/> .

Sec. 10 NRCS Earth Team Award

This award is presented annually to a deserving SWCD and conservation partnership for their local volunteer work supporting conservation. The Earth Team Volunteer Program began in 1981 when Congress passed legislation allowing USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to use volunteers to help with programs and projects. In 2009, more than 30,000 Earth Team Volunteers donated more than 800,000 hours of their time to conservation practices. The total value of their volunteer time was over \$15 million.

For more information on becoming involved as an Earth Team Volunteer in Indiana or on recruiting volunteers for a conservation project, visit: http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/about/ETV/ETV_homepage.html .