

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's Conservation Farmers of the Year are Hoosier farmers who actively incorporate and practice conservation on the land. The award is sponsored by Indiana Farm Bureau Inc. and Indiana Prairie Farmer in cooperation with the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD). One Indiana farmer will be honored as the top conservation-minded producer in the Hoosier state.

Any active farmer in Indiana is eligible to be nominated for the award. However, all nominees must have developed a Conservation Plan with their local NRCS office. Preference also will be shown to applicants who demonstrate that they earn at least 50 percent of their income from farming. Each county Soil and Water Conservation District (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, IASWCD encourages this applicant to also be submitted for consideration as the state winner.

Farmers who have been using conservation management practices for at least 25 years are eligible to apply for the "Career Conservation Farmer" distinction. Career Conservation Farmer nominees must complete the additional narrative section.

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 from 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.

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. Watershed organizations also may nominate farmers for the award by submitting an application to a county SWCD.

The applicant must mail in a signature page, which includes the signatures of the farmer nominee, a SWCD staff person, and a technical representative. The SWCD representative will complete an onsite farm review of the RFF farmer/nominee's farm prior to signing the application.

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. 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

Envirothon is a competitive learning event for high school-aged students. Envirothon tests the student's knowledge of environmental resources including soils, forestry, wildlife and 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.

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. One winner in each of three categories will be recognized. Past recipients of this award are not eligible to receive the award again.

Categories for the Friend of Conservation Award are: Corporate, Individual, and Nonprofit/Government. One winner from each category will be recognized.

Those nominated for this award must have made a positive contribution to soil and water conservation efforts, particularly in their public outreach and education work. Conservation programs or projects the nominees have been involved in may be local, regional or statewide in nature. They may be nominated for a single project or for contributions made to multiple conservation projects over time. Results are important and must be adequately detailed in the application

Sec. 6 Supervisor of the Year Award

This award is designed to recognize outstanding and exemplary SWCD supervisor achievements and leadership in the protection and enhancement of Indiana's soil and water resources. Any current District supervisor serving on a local Indiana Soil and Water Conservation District Board is eligible to be nominated, with the exception of current IASWCD officers and region directors. Nominations may be made by any individual, organization, agency or conservation partner.

Materials such as articles, photos, etc. that support the supervisor's achievements and leadership are encouraged to be send as a supplement to the application.

Sec. 7 District Showcase Award

Indiana's District Showcase Award is designed to highlight the success of four local SWCDs in the Hoosier state. The award focus allows Districts the opportunity to share new project ideas or better ways to design and implement existing conservation projects, etc. The award is sponsored by the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP).

Winners will have the opportunity to showcase their work during a visit by the ICP leaders, receive special recognition at the IASWCD Annual Conference, showcase their winning project at the Annual Conference, and be highlighted in partnership newsletters, Web sites and statewide news releases.

Sec. 8 NACD Poster Contest

The annual National Conservation Poster Contest provides kindergarten through twelfth grade students an opportunity to convey their thoughts about soil, water and related natural resource issues through art. It also highlights the educational outreach efforts of conservation districts and their state conservation associations, auxiliaries and agencies. The poster contest theme follows the annual Stewardship theme. The contest is co-

sponsored by the National Association of Conservation Districts and the NACD Auxiliary.

Each year, the poster contest starts at the district level. District winners advance to the state level. For questions regarding state competitions, districts should contact IASWCD. Finally, state winners advance to the National Contest. National winners are recognized each year at the NACD Annual Meeting.

Sec. 9 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. During 2013, nearly 2,000 Indiana Earth Team volunteers donated almost 18,000 hours in more than 80 percent of the field offices around the state. The value of this work is calculated at \$400,000. That is about five full-time staff years of assistance that helps the agency continue to carry out an effective conservation program.

For more information on becoming involved as an Earth Team Volunteer in Indiana or on recruiting volunteers for a conservation project, visit:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/in/people/volunteers/>