

# INDIANA'S MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN SOIL SAMPLING PROGRAM

INDIANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
DIVISION OF SOIL CONSERVATION

Presented by: Ophelia Norman  
Nutrient Stewardship Program Manager  
[odavis@isda.in.gov](mailto:odavis@isda.in.gov)



# COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

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- Federally funded by the US EPA Gulf Hypoxia Program (GHP) created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill
- Non-competitive funds awarded to Hypoxia Task Force Member States, Tribes, and Organizations to further efforts of our Nutrient Reduction Strategies
- Activities associated with these funds must take place within the Mississippi River Basin (MRB)
- The ISDA and partners throughout the state have worked with the Gulf Hypoxia Program to develop the Mississippi River Basin Soil Sampling Program (MRB SSP). This program focuses on increasing the knowledge and use of soil sampling as a nutrient management practice, including the 4R nutrient management strategy, to benefit production agricultural acreage.

# PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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- Program goal of sampling **100,000 acres** by the end of grant
- IN MRB SSP aligns with Indiana Agricultural Nutrient Alliance goals:

Work toward the IANA goal for 100% of farmers regularly performing soil sampling.

Provide Indiana farmers with the necessary information and tools to develop a plan for nutrient management to improve nutrient use efficiency.

Educate and promote 4R Nutrient Stewardship to farmers, conservation professionals, and crop advisors.

**Program Background**

Soil sampling is an integral part of soil fertility management. Soil sampling provides information on the fertility status of soils within a field that can be used for making nutrient application recommendations, and monitoring soil fertility over time. Effective soil sampling can improve on-farm nutrient use efficiency, leading to increased return on investment for nutrient application and reducing the risk of nutrient runoff.

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) and partners throughout the state have worked with the Gulf Hypoxia Program to develop a soil sampling program. This program focuses on increasing the knowledge and use of soil sampling as a nutrient management practice to benefit on-farm operations.

**Benefits of Soil Sampling**

A few of the many benefits to soil sampling are:

- Determines nutrient levels in a field
- Helps determine the amount and type of fertilizer needed for optimized use resulting in reduced nutrient loss
- May promote higher yielding and better quality crops
- Measures changes in soil fertility over time
- May help decrease input costs, increasing profits
- Improves soil health



Figure 1. Eligible program area (green).

**Program Eligibility**

This program includes row crop, pasture, hay, and specialty crop production systems located within the Mississippi River Basin (Figure 1). This program excludes personal or hobby gardens and private lawns.

Participating growers must be willing to sign-up 100 acres or less and will be prioritized by:

- Fields that have never been sampled, or
- Fields that have not been sampled within last 4 years, and
- New program enrollments.

**Soil Sampling**

Producers will work with ISDA staff to coordinate soil sampling and provide information.

will implement a management zone sampling methodology based on soil types and a field's dominant soil types. Number of samples to be collected is based on dominant soil types and field conditions encountered. Samples collected prior to fertilizer application.

**Analysis**

Samples will be collected prior to fertilizer application. Samples will be sent to a contracted lab for analysis. Soil samples will be analyzed for organic carbon, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, calcium, soil pH, buffer pH, cation exchange capacity, and % base saturation of cation elements.

Producers may inquire about other tests. However, ISDA cannot guarantee funds to cover the additional tests and participants may need to cover those additional costs.

**Getting Results**

A results packet will be mailed and/or sent via email including lab results, educational materials, and other soil health information.

ISDA, our partners, or trusted crop advisors may be able to help you determine next steps after receiving your results.

**How to enroll?**

Interested individuals can reach out to [soilsampling@isda.in.gov](mailto:soilsampling@isda.in.gov), the contact information below, by scanning the QR Code, or reach out to your local ISDA Resource Specialist for program participation.

Check our website ([www.in.gov/isda](http://www.in.gov/isda)) for program updates.

For more information contact:

**Ophelia Norman**  
Statewide Nutrient Stewardship Program Manager  
Indiana State Department of Agriculture  
Phone: 317-232-0305  
Email: [odavis@isda.in.gov](mailto:odavis@isda.in.gov)



# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## Program Launch: September 2023

Partners: Indiana Conservation Partnership members, Indiana Corn Marketing Council, Indiana Soybean Alliance, SWCDs, Urban Soil Health Program, Ag Retailers, Indiana Agriculture Nutrient Alliance, labs, and producers.

Implementation: ISDA Technical Staff & Private Sector; focus on smaller-scale producers and who may not be sampling or not sampling regularly.

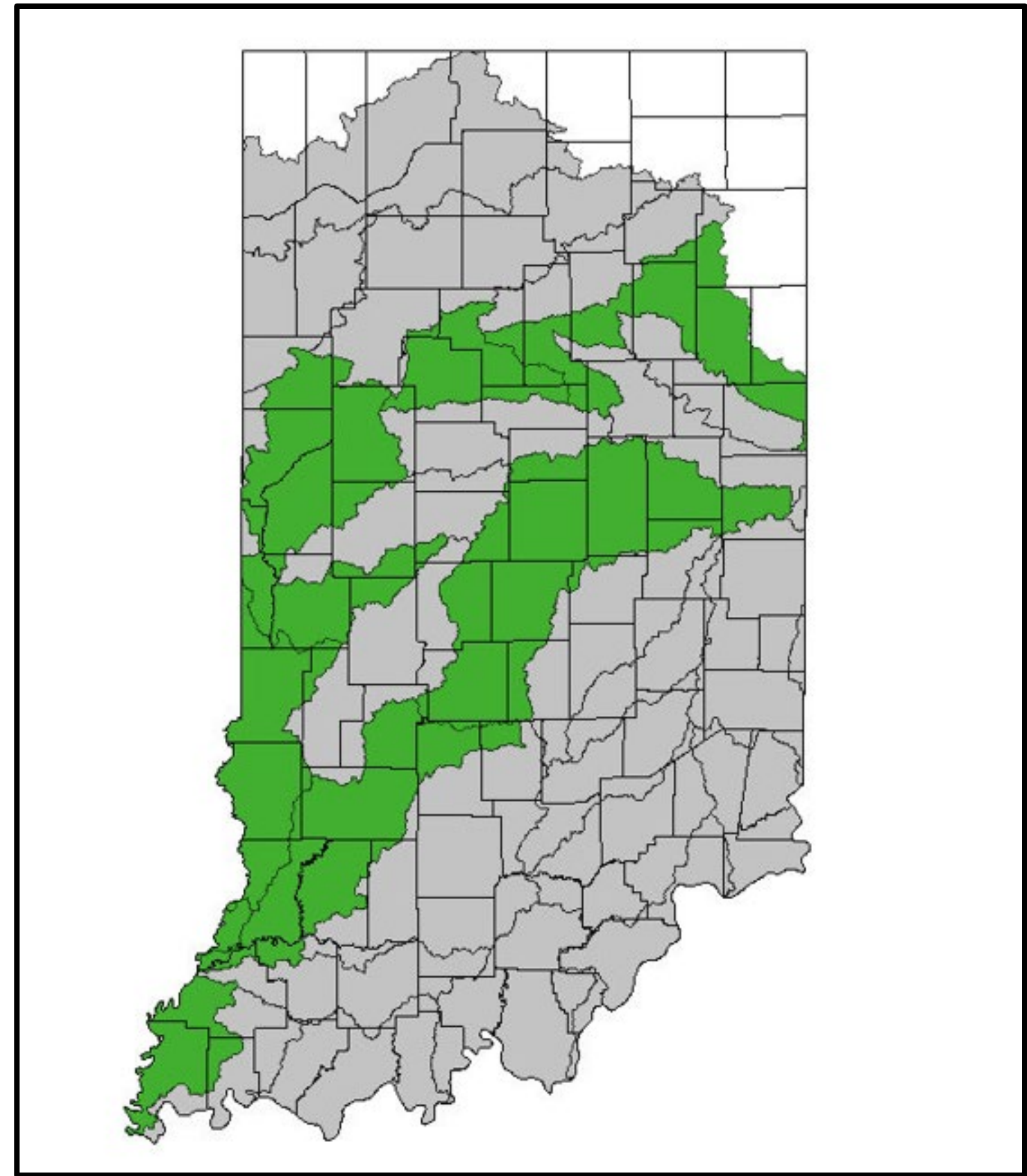
Promotion: Postcard mailings to 44 counties by ICMC & ISA, messaging to all 92 county SWCDs, ISDA press releases, peer-to-peer communication, DSS monthly news bulletin, ISDA attendance at relevant events, social media posts, and partner promotion in newsletters.

# PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

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- Eligible acreage for this program includes\*: row crop fields, pastures, hay, and specialty crops located within the Mississippi River Basin (Figure 1).
- Landowners/renters may enroll up to 100 acres or less.
  - For those interested in having more acreage sampled, there are ISDA partnerships in place with CCAs (6 currently) across the state who will complete grid sampling on up to 400 acres per registrant and provide a lite nutrient management plan as a deliverable for program contractual requirements.
- Participating registrants are prioritized by:
  - Fields that have never been sampled, or
  - Fields that haven't been sampled regularly (i.e., not sampled within last 3-4 years), and
  - New program enrollments

*\*This program excludes personal or hobby gardens and private lawns.*



**Figure 1. Eligible watersheds within the Mississippi River Basin indicating priority (green) and non-priority watersheds (gray).**



# RESULTS & IMPACT TO DATE

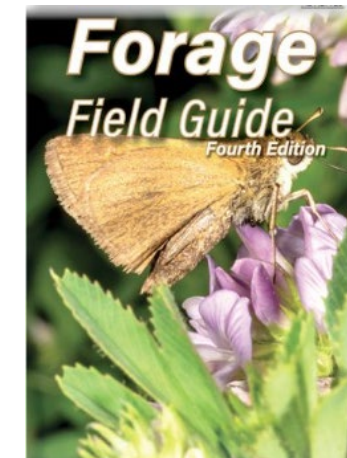
- 4 sampling open registrations since inception
  - Fall 2023
  - Spring 2024
  - Fall 2024
  - Spring 2025
  - *Fall 2025 – just opened 9/2/2025*
- Over **48,600** acres across **>2,475** fields managed by **>670** Landowners/Renters/Farms
- Majority of participants indicating they have never soil tested or haven't soil tested within the last 4 years

- Registered Acreage Breakdown:
  - Crop acres – **58%**
  - Hay/pasture acres - **41%** (\*highest # of fields overall)
  - Specialty acres - **<1%** (*examples: lavender, Christmas trees, apple orchards, daylilies, etc.*)
- Nearly all those who have registered acres for sampling have received results – Spring 2025 holdovers

Total cost savings to Indiana landowners and farmers participating in the Mississippi River Basin Soil Sampling program in: Over **\$150,000!**

# NOT JUST LANDOWNERS

- Additional impactful benefits of this program include collaborative learning opportunities for ISDA, partners and landowners:
  - Soil Sampling Lab Tours (staff and partners)
  - Demonstrative Field Day and Beef Producer Tour
  - Educational Materials outside of just soil analysis reports
  - ISDA Field Staff report using this program as a convo starter to help broach other conservation topics with landowners
  - More to come!



# LOOKING AHEAD


- Current funds will cover Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 rounds of our soil sampling program.
- Plans are to continue this program opportunity with the new workplan that was just submitted in July – would take effect in Fall 2026.
- Once final approval is received and more discussions happen will share more.
- For Fall 2025, registration will be open from Tuesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup> through Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup>.
  - How do you register you ask? Great question...

# HOW TO REGISTER AS A LANDOWNER/ RENTER

<https://www.in.gov/isda/divisions/soil-conservation/indiana-soil-sampling-program/>

IN.gov An official website of the Indiana State Government

Accessibility Settings Language Translation Governor Mike Braun

MENU  Indiana State Department of Agriculture

Search ISDA

## Indiana's Mississippi River Basin Soil Sampling Program

ISDA > Divisions > Soil Conservation > Indiana's Mississippi River Basin Soil Sampling Program

ISDA has reached workload capacity at this time for this soil sampling program

### About

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) and partners throughout the state have worked with the Gulf Hypoxia Program (GHP) to develop a project with a focus on increasing the knowledge and use of soil sampling as a nutrient management practice to benefit farm operations.

ISDA promotes the importance of nutrient management and the principle of the [4R Nutrient Stewardship](#) framework. The 4R Nutrient Stewardship framework incorporates using the "Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time, and Right Place" to achieve cropping system goals. This program focuses on soil sampling because it is a key component, and first step, of developing a plan for nutrient management. If used effectively, soil sampling provides an assessment of the soil's fertility which can be used for making fertilizer application recommendations, assessing available nutrients over time, increase farmer profitability, and enhance environmental protection by reducing the risk of nutrient loss.


### Eligibility Requirements

### How It Works

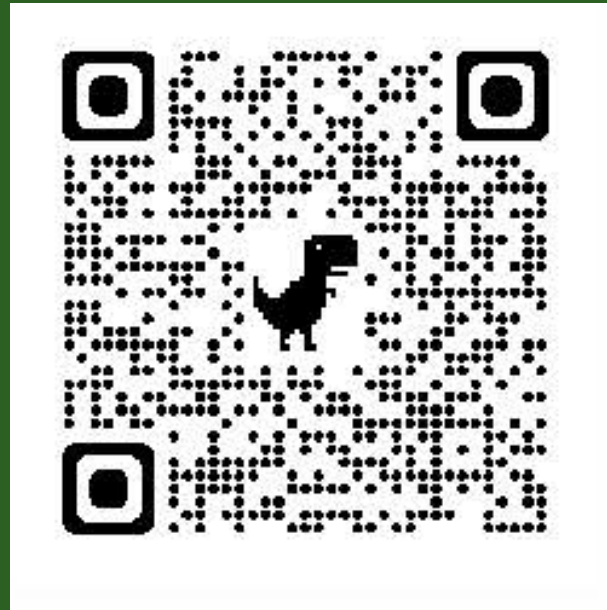
### Getting Results

### How to Sign-Up

### Resources for Producers

 [Step-by-step help document link here too](#)

# Questions?



Ophelia Norman

Nutrient Stewardship Program Manager - ISDA

[odavis@isda.in.gov](mailto:odavis@isda.in.gov)

## Tyler, Geneva (ISDA)

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**From:** Microsoft Power Apps and Power Automate <microsoft@powerapps.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 26, 2025 3:04 PM  
**To:** Harmon, Leah; Tyler, Geneva (ISDA)  
**Subject:** Update: Crawford Temp/Vacant Appt

**EXTERNAL EMAIL:** This email was sent from outside your organization. Exercise caution when clicking links, opening attachments or taking further action, before validating its authenticity.

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

<b>SWCD</b>
Crawford
<b>Appointment Type</b>
Vacant_Appointed_Position
<b>Who is the Candidate Replacing?</b>
David Grow
<b>Term Expiration</b>
1/1/2026
<b>Reason for Vacancy</b>
Resignation
<b>Supervisor Candidate Name</b>
Garry Brown
<b>Address</b>
3524 W Brown Mountain Rd
<b>City, State, ZIP</b>
St. Croix, IN 47576
<b>Qualifications</b>
Garry has many years of experience being on the SWCD Board of Supervisors, holding the Treasurer position. Also, Garry raises cattle on his 140 acre farm. He has installed several practices on his farm to reduce runoff and improve water quality.
<b>Occupation</b>
Garry retired from the Crawford County Highway Department and currently works for the Indiana State Highway Department. Brown devotes his time to the High School Athletics as an official for numerous sports.

**Conservation Interests**

He is concerned about the future of Crawford county farmers and innovative ways to improve their farms.

**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**

Richard Langdon

**Date of Submission**

08/26/2025

**Is a letter of resignation attached?**

Yes

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

July 28, 2025,

To: Richard Langdon, Chair, Crawford County Soil and Water Conservation District

Effective July 28, 2025, 5:00 PM EST, I resign.

*David Grow*

David Grow

## Tyler, Geneva (ISDA)

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**From:** Microsoft Power Apps and Power Automate <microsoft@powerapps.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 19, 2025 11:52 AM  
**To:** Harmon, Leah; Tyler, Geneva (ISDA)  
**Subject:** Update: Orange Temp/Vacant Appt

**EXTERNAL EMAIL:** This email was sent from outside your organization. Exercise caution when clicking links, opening attachments or taking further action, before validating its authenticity.

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

<b>SWCD</b>
Orange
<b>Appointment Type</b>
Temporary_Elected_Position
<b>Who is the Candidate Replacing?</b>
George Key
<b>Term Expiration</b>
1/1/2027
<b>Reason for Vacancy</b>
Resignation
<b>Supervisor Candidate Name</b>
Ryan Daugherty
<b>Address</b>
255 E Co Rd 575 N
<b>City, State, ZIP</b>
Orleans, IN 47452
<b>Qualifications</b>
Ryan is a lifelong resident and landowner in Orange County, Indiana. Ryan and his wife raise registered Texas Longhorn and Angus cattle on their family farm
<b>Occupation</b>
Ryan is the Project Manager at Daugherty Services, Inc. offering extensive services include plumbing, excavating, portable toilets, sewer and drain cleaning, septic system installation, and water and sewer line.

**Conservation Interests**

Over the past years, he has participated in numerous workshops focused on conservation programs and land management practices offered through the Soil and Water Conservation District in partnership with organizations such as NRCS, FSA, ISDA, CISMMA, and various watershed and habitat groups. Ryan is actively involved in conservation efforts and has implemented several best management practices on his land. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Construction Management from Indiana State University, which supports his technical knowledge in planning, project execution, and infrastructure development related to land improvement and conservation projects. In 2023, he completed a cropland conversion to hay and pasture (512) through LARE and CWI programs. This included planting 22.3 acres across 2 tracts with Orchard Grass and Alfalfa, followed with lime and fertilizer. In 2022, he completed an EQIP project involving the construction of an access road (560) and an HUAP (561) on another tract.

**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**

Daniel Springer

**Date of Submission**

08/08/2025

**Is a letter of resignation attached?**

Yes

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



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**Orange County Soil and Water Conservation District**  
573 SE Main St – Paoli, IN 47454 – Phone (812) 203-3033

Date: 6/9/2025

Subject: SWCD Board Member Resignation Letter

Dear State Soil Conservation Board,

I regret to inform you of my resignation as a board member for the Orange County Soil and Water Conservation District, effective March 10, 2025. Due to being voted in as a Council Member for Orange County, I must step down. I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the District and wish them all the best going forward.

Sincerely,

George Key



# State Soil Conservation Board

September 9, 2025

Nutrient Stewardship Update, Ophelia Norman



## Mississippi River Basin Soil Sampling Program

- Registration for this fall opened last Tuesday, September 2, 2025, and will remain open through Friday, October 17, 2025.
- The registration process will be the same as it was this past spring after some changes were made allowing landowners to digitally identify the acreage they are requesting to be sampled so soil maps can be pulled directly from registration and sent to field staff to allow for more efficient use of field staff time and more precise field locating which were made as a result of feedback from field staff.
- The program acreage enrollment threshold will continue to remain at 100 acres (crop, pasture, hay, specialty) to ensure Resource Specialists are able to maintain workload capacity for other program contributions.
- The program webpage has been updated to reflect program information and can be found on the [ISDA website](#).
- Learning opportunities to date for ISDA staff, partners and landowners/growers: Tour @ A&L Laboratory in Fort Wayne (April), 2 Tours @ Waters Lab in Owensboro, KY (April & September), Pasture Field Day in Lawrence County (May), IN Beef Producer Tour to South Dakota and Nebraska (March/April) – more to come.
- This program includes Indiana watersheds within the MRB and excludes the WLEB and Lake Michigan Basins. This is due to federal statutory language associated with the funds.
- More details on the MRB SSP will be shared in today's presentation.

## Gulf Hypoxia Program (GHP)

- Upcoming meetings for the GHP CC Taskforce in 2025: September 24-25 and first week of December.
- No-cost extension was just approved which means current dollars are extended through spring/summer of 2026.
- Workplan #2 was submitted by July 1 deadline and awaiting to hear back on final approval.
- As a reminder, these are non-competitive funds established under the GHP to allow Hypoxia Task Force Member states to further their nutrient reduction strategy efforts.

# IASWCD Update - August 2025



INDIANA ASSOCIATION OF  
soil and water conservation  
DISTRICTS

## Conservation Farm Tour, September 18



Join us for the Indiana Conservation Farm Tour featuring the **2024 Indiana Conservation Farmer of the Year, Hackman Family Farm in Jackson County!**

**Walking tour includes three education stations** highlighting the farm's proven conservation practices and hear directly from the Hackman family about how these efforts contribute to their farm's success and sustainability.

Enjoy time to connect with fellow conservationists, SWCD supervisors and staff and partners, while enjoying a hearty downhome lunch of **Creebank Taters**—a nostalgic conservation tradition.



Register at [iaswcd.org](https://iaswcd.org). Registration ends September 11.

## River Friendly Farmer Award Ceremony, 53 Farmers Honored

At the **August 6 River Friendly Farmer Award ceremony**, 53 Indiana farmers were honored for their dedication to conservation and water quality. Approximately 35 farm families attended the event at the Indiana State Fairgrounds, with **nearly 180 people in total joining the celebration**. The ceremony was opened by IASWCD President Marc Roberts and emceed by Eric Shideler, with inspiring remarks from Lt. Governor Micah Beckwith, IFB President Randy Kron, ISDA Director Don Lamb, and Jerod Chew of NRCS. The atmosphere was uplifting as families proudly received recognition and enjoyed a day at the fair. Special thanks go to our financial sponsors—**Indiana Corn Marketing Council, Indiana Soybean Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, and Indiana Farm Bureau**—as well as to ISDA, Indiana Beef Council, American Dairy Association of Indiana, and Indiana Pork for their generous contributions of tickets and support. Special thanks to **Kris Vance, NRCS**, for being the day-of photographer extraordinaire! A full list of 2025 award recipients can be found at [iaswcd.org](https://iaswcd.org).



## Indiana's Conservation Awards

Nominations for Indiana's 2025-2026 Conservation Awards will be open from **October 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026**. Awards include: Conservation Farmer of the Year, Friend of Conservation, SWCD Supervisor, and District Showcase. Details can be found at [iaswcd.org](https://iaswcd.org).

## **SWCD Region Meetings**

Four Summer Region Meetings were held in July and August:

NNE - July 30

SSW - Aug 18

SNW - Aug 21

NSW - Aug 26

Two remaining meetings are scheduled:

SSE	Cornucopia Farms, Scottsburg	September 10	5:30 pm	<a href="#">Read More</a> <a href="#">REGISTER</a> by 9/5
NSE	Hog Rock Cafe, Osgood	September 17	6:30 pm - 8:30 pm	<a href="#">Read More</a> <a href="#">REGISTER</a> by 9/12

Details for meetings and flyers can be found on the IASWCD website ([iaswcd.org](http://iaswcd.org)) and ISDA's Conservation Link.

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## **IASWCD Annual Business Meeting**

# **IASWCD BUSINESS MEETING DECEMBER 19, 2025**

**9:00 AM - 3:00 PM (Eastern)  
Lunch provided**

Districts in good standing (with IASWCD dues paid) are asked to submit the names of a voting supervisor delegate and an alternate by December 9. Full details on delegate requirements and the submission process can be found at [iaswcd.org](http://iaswcd.org).

- Legislative Panel
- Resolutions Review
- IASWCD Business: budget overview, election of officers, voting on resolutions
- Election of District Region Directors for IASWCD Board

## Report to the State Soil Conservation Board

September 9, 2025

### Program Director Activities

#### **FY25 GOAL: Recruit and hire the second cohort (7) Conservation Technicians.**

- Interviewing applicants for the last two vacancies.
- The RITA Techs that started in June will be receiving their 90 day reviews in September.
- The new RITA Techs are mostly finished getting their LincPasses and transitioning to USDA computers.

#### **ONGOING GOAL: Serve as a liaison for the agreement, and publicize opportunities related to the agreement to SWCDs statewide.**

- The RITA in Action essays in IASWCD's Conservation INsight newsletter have continued. The essays spotlight what the RITA Techs are doing.
- A Facebook page and a LinkedIn page has been set up to showcase RITA activities.

#### **ONGOING GOAL: Work with NRCS program contact and qualified professionals to ensure the work identified in this agreement progresses as planned and meets technical standards and requirements.**

- Verbal conversation with Jerod Chew and Shannon Zezula, NRCS, indicated that the first cohort of RITA Techs have completed Level 1 Certified Conservation Planners.

#### **ONGOING GOAL: Identify relevant training opportunities to support Conservation Technicians in their pursuit to become Certified Conservation Planners.**

- All RITA Techs participated in CCSI's Machinery Workshops this summer.
- The second cohort of RITA Techs have participated in Hoosier Riverwatch training, Ag101 and assorted Extension and SWCD field days.
- Three of the RITA Techs completed the 2025 SWCS Emerging Leaders Program.
- Nine of the RITA Techs are signed up for the 2026 SWCS Emerging Leaders Program.
- Five of the first cohort of Techs expect to participate in the Watershed Leadership Academy in 2026.
- Emma Bodnarick, Jamie Davenport and Hanna Garriott joined Leader at the SWCS conference in early August. We jointly presented an introduction to Resilient Indiana that was well received.

RITA Technicians Activities

**ONGOING GOAL: Support SWCD priorities and projects and track selected metrics in five categories:**

➤ **Outreach Activities**

Activities	Total
Attend SWCD board meetings	180
Attend ICP Meetings, Conference Calls, Webinars	216
Attend Field Days and Trainings	299
Present objectives/accomplishments at SWCD board meetings	92
Presentations at Field Days and Trainings	17
Presentations to the general public	158
Educational interactions with producers/forest owners	18
One-on-One discussions with land users on the benefits of soil health and improving water quality	131

➤ **Technical Assistance Activities – Resource Concerns**

Soil Health Management	79	Drainage & Water Management	53
Commodity Crops/Cover Crops Management	42	Invasives Management	118
Livestock/Pasture Management	16	Diversified/Orchard/Urban Gardens Management	85
Woodlands/Agroforestry Management	26		
TA to support Historically Underserved and Socially Disadvantaged Producers			45

➤ **Planning and Engineering Activities**

Completed conservation planning activities	3	Number of designs/inspections completed	5
Number of surveys	7	Number of construction checks completed	1

➤ **Program Support**

CWI Grants	79	RCPP Grants	2
LARE Grants	3	Other Farm Bill Programs	2
ISDA Soil Sampling	1	NACD Grants	0
EPA 319 Grants	12	Other Agency and NGO Grants*	18

\* LaGrange SWCD has WQ grants through the REMC and the Community Foundation  
Adams SWCD's FFA Day at the Lake is supported by the Maumee Watershed Alliance

➤ **ICP Collaboration Activities**

Field/Tillage Checks	21	ICP Referrals	3
Transect Participation	14	Meetings with other ICP Staff	38

## Introducing Megan Bourns, Purdue Extension Soil Fertility Specialist

Megan Bourns is the new Purdue Extension Soil Fertility Specialist and will be working with fellow specialists, Extension Educators, partners and clientele on fertility related agronomic issues. She is excited to have joined Purdue as the new Extension Soil Fertility Specialist and is looking forward to being a part of the Extension team.

Megan is originally from Winnipeg, Manitoba, where she completed a bachelor's in agronomy and a master's in soil science, focusing on potassium fertility for soybeans. She then worked as an agronomist with a farmer-funded soybean and pulse crop organization, managing their on-farm research program. Later, Megan completed her PhD at Kansas State University, where her research centered on phosphorus fertility management for corn and soybean.

Before starting here at Purdue in August 2025, Megan was a postdoctoral fellow with the University of Arkansas, working on the Fertilizer Recommendation Support Tool (FRST) Project—a national, collaborative effort on soil test correlation and calibration for major crop nutrients.

She is excited to get to meet everyone and better understand the soil fertility research and extension needs across the state.

She can be reached at:

[mbourns@purdue.edu](mailto:mbourns@purdue.edu)

Office: 765-494-7227

Cell: 785-473-8660



# Indiana NRCS State Conservationist Report

September 2025 State Soil Conservation Board Meeting

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## INDIANA NRCS REORGANIZATION

### *Regional Hubs*

Secretary of Agriculture Rollins announced the first phase of USDA's reorganization, primarily focused on relocating a large portion of its Washington D.C. based staff to five new "hub" locations around the country. This move aims to reduce costs associated with the high cost of living in the D.C. area and bring the agency's workforce closer to its core constituents.

More than half of the approximately 4,600 employees currently working in the D.C. area are expected to relocate to **five new hub locations**. The five designated hubs are: Raleigh, North Carolina; Kansas City, Missouri; **Indianapolis, Indiana**; Fort Collins, Colorado; and Salt Lake City, Utah. **Public comment period has been extended to September 30.**

More information can found in the Secretary's Memorandum: <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/07/24/secretary-rollins-announces-usda-reorganization-restoring-departments-core-mission-supporting>

### *Critical Vacancies*

It is estimated that **300 of 1200 critical vacancies nationwide** were filled. **Indiana NRCS is filling 10 critical vacancies**. Staffing changes have not been released publicly yet because we are still waiting for all HR actions to be completed.

## ONE FARMER, ONE FILE

NRCS is exploring a "One Farmer/One File" concept. This collaborative effort aims to create a more user-friendly and efficient experience for farmers by simplifying access to USDA programs and resources and reducing administrative burdens, saving employees and producers time. It will **allow farmers and NRCS staff to access farm data in real-time**, making it easier to develop and implement conservation plans.

## FARM BILL PROGRAMS

### *Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)*

**CSP renewals are paused**, and most IRA modifications are paused due to passage of Big Beautiful Bill. Currently only direct contract transfers can be done with IRA contracts. No modifications are allowed at this time until NRCS gets additional guidance.

### *Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative (MRBI)*

**Buckhorn Creek (Spencer County area) and Sugar Creek (Shelby County area) have been selected** for targeted funding in the next round of EQIP.

### *National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)*

**Cicero Creek (Clinton Boone, Hamilton and Tipton Counties) has been selected** for targeted funding in the next round of EQIP.

### *Removal of DEI Criteria*

**USDA is removing race and gender considerations from its program eligibility criteria and application scoring**. This change is in response to Executive Order 14151 and a [final rule](#)

[published in the Federal Register](#) on July 10, 2025, which prohibits discriminatory preferences based on race and sex in USDA programs. Additional information on how this impacts NRCS financial assistance programs is forthcoming.

#### *Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)*

Wabash River RCPP: In October of 2024, we announced the selection of the Wabash River RCPP Project for Indiana and Illinois. The project area covered a large percentage of the NW area and smaller portions of counties in the NE and SW areas. Due to the changes implemented by the current administration, the RCPP Team at National Headquarters reevaluated RCPP projects without a fully executed partner supplemental agreement. After the review process was completed, it was determined the **Wabash River RCPP project no longer meets the established ranking criteria and therefore will no longer be funded.**

Southern Indiana Sentinel Landscape RCPP: The passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act rescinded unobligated RCPP-IRA funding. NHQ staff are currently awaiting guidance on how this ultimately impacts the future of this project. At this time, we are **pausing all land management and/or easements applications** for this RCPP project until additional guidance is received from headquarters.

#### **ACES AGREEMENT**

The ACES Agreement was set to expire on August 29 but has been **extended until December 31.**

#### **SMALL FARM TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Three Indiana NRCS urban agreements are getting ready to expire in FY25. Shannon Zezula, State Resource Conservationist, is **working on a plan to add additional funding to these agreements** to continue small farm technical assistance. This effort will move to a more “boots on the ground” concept. More information will be shared if/when funding is secured.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY DATA COLLECTION**

NRI is the National Resources Inventory, a statistical survey of land use and natural resource conditions and trends on U.S. non-Federal lands. **Indiana’s NRI data collection will begin on September 1, 2025, and runs through until the end of January 2026.** The soils staff at the state office will collect the data. Field office staff and FSA may be contacted to provide producer-specific information, such as, tillage practices, conservation plans, cropping history, etc. If you have any comments or questions, please contact John Allen, State Soil Scientist at [john.allen@usda.gov](mailto:john.allen@usda.gov).