

Stephenson Soil & Water Conservation District's Woodland Tour:

Saturday, October 10th
9:30 AM at 433 Hancock
Avenue, Freeport IL.

Join woodland enthusiasts on an autumn morning to view woodland acres along the Pecatonica River's floodplain. This hardwood forest was planted after many years of crop damage due to flooding of the Pecatonica River. The Jewells enrolled 18.1 acres into the Riparian Buffer portion of U.S.D.A.'s Conservation Reserve Program. Species planted included: walnut, swamp white oak, pin oak, burr oak, hickory, green ash, and silver maple. 5,000 trees, amongst were planted using direct nut planting, transplanted seedlings, and Root Pruned Method (R.P.M.) trees. This is an opportunity to exchanged ideas & have questions answered by experts, in an outdoor, woodland setting. Visit the Winnebago Indian camp site, touch beaver cuttings, and guess which animals roamed the 44 acres. Scheduled speakers include Wayne Loveless, from Forrest Keeling Nursery, Elsberry Missouri, discussing R.P.M. tree systems, Debbie Fluegel, Trees Forever, representative from Natural Resources Conservation Service, Stephenson Co. Soil & Water District, Wild Turkey Federation, Highland Chapter of Pheasants Forever, Boy Scout Troop from Schaumburg, Illinois. Information booths will be on-site.



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Mark Your Calendars



Monday, October 12, 2009

Office Closed for Columbus Day

Wednesday, November 11, 2009:

Office Closed for Veteran's Day

Thursday, November 26, 2009:

Office Closed for Thanksgiving

Friday, December 25, 2009:

Office Closed for Christmas

Friday, January 1, 2010

Office Closed for New Year's Day

Monday, January 18, 2010

Office Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday

February 2010

SWCD 67th Annual Meeting

March 16, 2010

*Land Use Council 1 Envirothon Competition
Highland Community College, Freeport*

March 2010

SWCD Spring Fish Sale

April 2010:

*SWCD Tree Sale Pick-up
Stephenson County Fairgrounds*

Books & Gift Certificates Make Great Gifts

The Soil and Water Conservation District has a wide variety of books for sale covering trees, shrubs, prairie plants and flowers, animal tracks, prairie reconstruction, and gardening with prairie plants. The classic Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold is also available. We recently added the 10th Edition of Forest Trees of Illinois; which was updated in 2009 by the University of Illinois Extension.

Gift certificates are available, for those hard-to-shop-for people on your list. A unique gift would be a gift certificate for trees available during the District's Spring Tree Sale. Or you can purchase a gift certificate for individuals that have ponds on their property to stock fish from either our Spring or Fall Fish Sales. Let the certificate recipient choose their own gift. Call or stop by the office and check what items are available.

Congratulations to Carly Neubauer



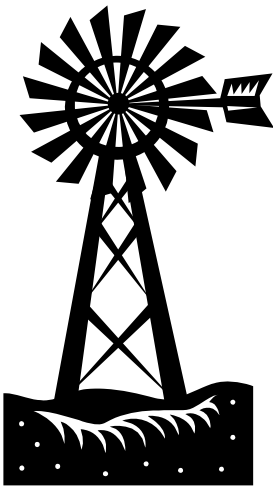
At our 66th Annual Meeting in February, Carly Neubauer was honored as the Kindergarten & Grade 1 category poster contest winner for her poster "Dig It – Secrets of Soil". This poster contest for the SWCD is coordinated by The Conservation and Agricultural Partners Foundation (CAP).

As a winner of our poster contest, Carly's poster was sent to the State Association for Illinois Soil and Water Conservation District (AISWCD).

Carly again came up as the winner of her age category and was honored at the AISWCD Summer Conference in Springfield IL in July 2009 at the Education Luncheon (see photo above).

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Carly for a great job and her family for making the 4 hour drive to Springfield to attend the award luncheon.

Decommissioning Abandoned Wells



An estimated 400,000 private water wells in Illinois provide drinking water to approximately 1.3 million people. Each year many of these wells are abandoned when they are replaced with new wells or when homes are connected to community water systems. An abandoned well can pose a health and safety hazard if it is improperly sealed or not sealed at all. An abandoned well can

serve as a direct route for ground water contamination for contaminated surface water, agricultural runoff and effluent from private sewage disposal systems. This can cause pollution of other wells in the area.

The basic concept in sealing an abandoned well is restoring the geological conditions that existed before the well was drilled. The particular method for sealing a well depends on the depth and the local geological features.

The ideas presented here are to make you, as a homeowner, aware of your drinking water system. If you have an abandoned well, the Stephenson Soil and Water Conservation District can assist in cost-share dollars for sealing your abandoned well.

The District is participating with the State of Illinois Department of Agriculture to seal abandoned wells. This cost-share amount has been raised a little and is set to not exceed \$300 or 60% of the actual cost, whichever is less.

Applicants must file a Request for Cost-Share Funds to Abandon a Water Well with the Soil & Water District to be eligible for cost-share assistance. The well must not be sealed prior to approval by the SWCD Board of Directors to receive these funds. Highest priority will always be assigned to private water wells posing the greatest risks. The wells are sealed with the cooperation of the Stephenson County Environmental Health Department.

Interested individuals may contact the SWCD office at (815) 235-2161 ext 3 for an application and details.

\$\$\$ CPP MONEY AVAILABLE

The Stephenson Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is currently accepting applications for the Conservation Practices Program (CPP). Interested landowners should contact our Resource Conservationist, Craig Schroeder, at the SWCD office to determine their eligibility for the programs.

The objective of the CPP programs is to assist landowners with:

- sheet and rill erosion exceeding the tolerable soil loss level (T)
- ephemeral gully erosion
- constructing C-2000 Program projects - which conserve soil, protect water quality, and reduce flooding
- reducing or eliminating the potential for groundwater pollution by providing incentives to owners of abandoned wells to properly decommission and seal the wells
- addressing water quality issues related to sediment, nutrients, and other non-point source pollutants

The Practices available for cost share dollars:

- Contour Farming Establishment: \$10/acre (for one year) - maintain ten years
- No-Till or Strip Till: \$20/acre (year one)– maintain one year - planted to corn and field never planted to no-till or strip till
- Well Decommissioning: 60% cost share not to exceed \$300 – once abandoned well is properly sealed, no maintenance is required
- Critical Area Plantings, Filter Strips, Diversions, Grade Stabilization Structures, Terraces, and Water & Sediment Control Basin: 60% cost share - maintain for ten years
- Grassed Waterways: 60% cost share – no yearly payment - maintain for ten years – hay made off of waterways is allowed
- Temporary Cover: Flat rate not to exceed \$150/acre - payment made to minimum acreage required for necessary construction activities

NOTE: The actual payment is based upon the cost share times the actual cost or estimated average cost - *whichever is lower.*

Erosion Netting is available through the District for all projects

Stephenson SWCD Accepting Nominations

The members of the present nominating committee (Chuck Moen, Craig Hassenius and Richard Holmes) are seeking people to nominate to serve a two year term of office beginning in 2010 on the Stephenson County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors.

Directors are the decision-makers and natural resource management leaders for the SWCD. This governing body consists of five elected directors who willingly give of their time to decide which natural resource and agriculture issues in Stephenson County need to be addressed, what actions will be taken, and who is responsible for getting the work done. It is their duty to approve the budget for all funds, approve all payments made by the District, and provide for an annual audit. They have the responsibility for personnel management of the office staff, providing job descriptions, performance standards, policies, and benefits while providing direction, motivation, and guidance.

If you are a landowner or occupy land in Stephenson County, of legal voting age, and would like to make a difference in the future of the counties' natural resources, a Director/Associate Director seat may be waiting for you.

If you would like to nominate someone, please fill out the form below and mail it to our office at 1620 S. Galena Avenue, Freeport IL 61032.

The SWCD is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Become an Earth Team Volunteer

As an Earth Team Volunteer, you'll work with professionals on conservation activities in your community. Whatever your talents or interests, there is a volunteer opportunity for you.

- Technical assistance is needed to plan, lay-out, and design conservation practices; to make natural resource inventories; and to improve wildlife habitat.
- Schools and community groups benefit from the conservation tours and exhibits that volunteers can organize.
- Taking photographs, writing articles, speaking to community groups, and producing artwork and publications are some of the opportunities available.
- Office support services include computer data entry, typing, filing, computer programming, and providing conservation information.

There are opportunities for everyone. Contact our office for more information on how you can become a volunteer.

Stephenson SWCD Nomination Form for Board of Directors

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____

Comments: _____

Conservation & Agricultural Partners

**Sunday, October 11, 2009
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.**



- Spend a leisurely fall afternoon in the country.
- Explore five of Stephenson County's unique barns.
- Learn the stories behind their distinctive charm

The **Stephenson County Barn Tour** is planned for **Sunday, October 11, 2009**, from 1:00 to 5:00. Participants will be directed through the Pearl City area on the self-guided tour to five barns that can be viewed at their own pace.

In addition to experiencing these historic barns, there will also be children's activities at each of the sites that will appeal to all ages. Pumpkins, apple cider doughnuts, and maple syrup will also be available for sale.

Proceeds will go to the CAP Foundation, a local, non-profit organization which is dedicated to teaching children to respect the land through agricultural and conservation education programs. During the past school year, CAP provided resources, materials, and programs to over 9,000 students, teachers, and individuals.

You are encouraged to purchase your **tickets** in advance for \$10 for adults and \$20 for families prior to October 11. Tickets will also be available the day of the tour at \$15 for individual tickets and \$25 for family tickets. Tickets may be purchased at the CAP office in the Stephenson County Farm Bureau building, at the Freeport and Stephenson County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, or by contacting CAP at 815-235-2165.

You may also e-mail CAP at cap@aeroinc.net.



Proceeds will go to the Conservation & Agricultural Partners Foundation, a local non-profit organization dedicated to teaching students about agriculture and how to care for our natural resources.



Why shouldn't I work my soybean ground this fall?

By: *Jim Ritterbusch*
District Conservationist

For years now the USDA and the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts have been saying that farmers should not work their soybean fields. We have been recommending that you no till your next crop into your past years soybean stubble. Have you ever wondered why we make those statements? These requirements are based on valid science. Here are five very good reasons to resist the temptation to work your soybean ground this fall:

1. This past spring all of the people that we found out of compliance had worked their soybean ground. If you work that soybean ground, you simply will not meet the requirements of your conservation compliance plan.
2. Most farmers like to work soybean ground because it works up so nicely. Have you ever thought about why it works up so well? If we look at how soybeans grow, we learn that they spend their entire life trying to loosen up the soil. In fact the soybean plant is so effective at this process that soybeans are without a doubt the most erosive crop in Northwest Illinois. So the reason that the ground works up so easily is because it is already loose. When the soybean field is worked, it creates a perfect opportunity for soil erosion to occur. There in lies the most important reason we don't want to see the ground tilled.
3. If we compare the amount of residue that corn and soybeans generate, it is very obvious which crop produces the most amount of residue. If we are looking to leave 40% of the ground covered after planting, it is possible to work corn ground and still leave that amount of residue. It is not possible to work soybean ground and leave even 20% ground cover. If you work your soybean stubble, you will not make the minimum 40% ground cover. It is not physically possible. Don't even try it.
4. We often hear that if soybean ground is worked, there is a 10 to 20 bushel advantage. I am not sure how to say this politely but that is simply not true. There is no credible research that proves there is a significant statistical advantage to an increase in yield due to simply working soybean residue. Yes, working soybean stubble allows the ground to warm sooner in the spring. However,

an even more important factor is starter fertilizer. All no-till corn into soybean stubble should use starter fertilizer. You will see a bigger impact from that one simple practice than from working the ground. Always use starter fertilizer—never work your soybean ground—it doesn't pay.

5. The cost of working soybean ground is about 8 to 12 dollars per acre. With the current price of corn at about \$3.00 plus per bushel, those 8 to 12 dollars would be better off in your pocket instead of ending up as smoke coming out of the exhaust of your tractor. It simply doesn't pay to work that ground.

So there you have it! It is not the David Letterman top-ten list, but it is five very valid reasons why you shouldn't work your soybean ground. I know there will be a lot of temptation to work that ground this fall, but I believe that you will find a lot better things to do with your time and money rather than spending them working ground needlessly.

So what happens to the farmers that have worked their soybean ground this spring? If we find them and they are not following their conservation plan, it will be determined that they are not actively applying their conservation plan which could result in them having to repay the USDA dollars that were earned this past year.

NRCS: Helping People Help the Land



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THE NEW CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The funding by the federal government of a Farm Bill benefits us all. Not only are you assured of sufficient food and fiber at a reasonable cost, you are participating in conserving soil and preserving water quality. Since 1985 programs of the Farm Bill have provided financial and technical assistance to producers so that they can better conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a new voluntary conservation program that provides opportunities to both recognize excellent stewards and deliver valuable new conservation. The program provides equitable access to all producers, regardless of operation size, crops produced, or geographic location. Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forestland, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe. Applicants must be the operator of record in the USDA farm records management system for the eligible land they wish to enroll.

CSP provides participants with two possible types of payments. An annual payment is available for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing activities. A supplemental payment may be earned by participants already receiving an annual payment who also adopt a resource-conserving crop rotation. (Crop rotation is thousands of years old – a method of maintaining soil fertility and structure by planting a field with alternating plant species, for example corn one year and soybeans the next.)

“This is the stewardship program that’s going to reward for existing conservation that’s on the ground and it’s going to encourage new conservation on the ground. Key thing here, it’s a working lands program. It is not a land retirement program,” explained Dave White, Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS),

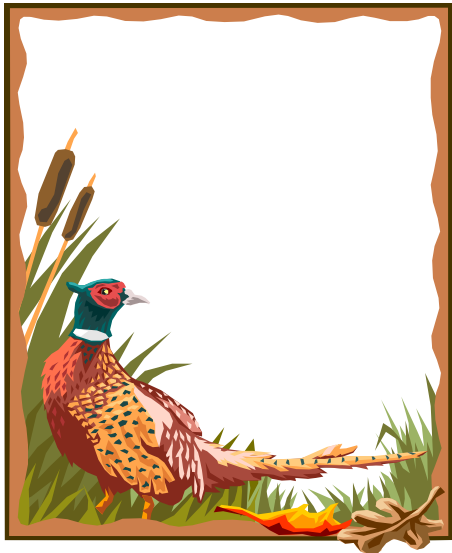
“We want the farmers and ranchers to keep producing and to recognize the commodities that they produce like clean air, clean water, and abundant wildlife and a healthy environment for all of us,” continued Chief White. “And hopefully through this we’ll also be able to help producer’s bottom line because all the conservation in the world is not going to do us a bit of good if those men and women can’t continue to make their living off the land. So we’re very cognizant of that. Sign up for this program began Monday, August 10th. It’s going to occur nationwide. It will be a continual sign up. Producers can go in at any time.”

Staffs at your county USDA/NRCS Field Office and Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) are prepared to explain the program and to help you take advantage of what it has to offer.

Dave White’s quotes are from the transcript of an August 19, 2009 On-Line Educational Seminar on the topic of CSP. This information and more about CSP can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/new_csp.

Della Moen, Earth Team Volunteer, NRCS/Stephenson Soil and Water Conservation District, an equal opportunity provider and employer, 08/26/09 (for publication on 09/05/09 in the *Journal Standard*, Freeport, Illinois) Della can be reached at info@stephensonswcd.org

Highland Chapter Pheasants Forever Banquet



Saturday, October 24, 2009

Eagles Club - 1200 W. Galena Avenue

- **4:30 Doors open**
- **5:30 Dinner**

Member Donation \$50.00

Guest \$25.00

Youth \$15.00

For Information & Tickets call:

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Fall Lawn Care & Fertilization

Early September is the best time to apply fall fertilization to keep your lawn healthy and to give it a boost next spring. But, before you head for the garden supply store, do some quick calculations. Giving you lawn an “overdose” of Nitrogen in the fall is wasteful, expensive and can be damaging to the environment.

With winter approaching, your lawn will soon go dormant. Most lawns will need only about 3 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square feet for an entire year and that is only if the lawn is in full sun. Shaded lawns need about half that amount. What happens to the rest? It is wasted.

Plants can utilize only so many nutrients. The rest remains in the soil where the nutrients can dissolve in the rain water that soaks into the ground, potentially polluting ground water or the rain can “wash” the excess nutrients off the lawn and into storm sewers where they are transported to our rivers streams and lakes.

These excess nutrients that end up in surface waters contribute to algal blooms and other problems, including the hypoxia problems in the Gulf of Mexico. Nutrients that end up in ground water can also cause problems with excess nitrates in well water.

Water is an important resource we can ill afford to loose. Even with the unusually wet spring and summer for 2008, we should be concerned about protecting and conserving our water resources. You may recall that just two short years ago, northern Illinois suffered severely from lack of rain.

If we use fertilizes and pesticides responsibly, we may be able to enjoy a both a beautiful lawn and ample clean drinking water supplies.

For more information on proper fertilization and other lawn care needs, you can consult the University of Illinois’ web site, “Lawn Talk - University of Illinois Extension” at <http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/lawntalk/lawntalk11.html>

Fall Waterway Construction

By Terry Kerchner

2009 is coming to a close, but harvest is still ahead. As with every fall, shortly after the combines start on the year's crops, so do the dozers, scrapers and tiling machines get going on grassed waterways, structures and terrace systems.

If you are seeking cost share assistance from any of the agencies, it is important that you read and understand all the rules and specifications for your project. It is imperative that all work be approved for funding before any work begins. Failure to do so will render the project ineligible for funding.

Plans, designs and specifications for the project will be provided. All plans are based on watershed size and slope, land use and the slope of the channel. The planned cross section and type of vegetation also dictate the width and depth of the waterway. It is important to assure that your hired contractor understands the design and has the knowledge and equipment to construct the waterway, as designed.

If tile is planned, it is usually best if it can be installed prior to shaping the waterway, although that is not a requirement. Your contractor must be able to install the tile in a consistent trench, with adequate tile support and even backfill. It is essential that only prior approved tile be supplied to the project.

Seedbed preparation and seeding is often the job of the landowner or operator. A light disking, field cultivation or harrow is usually all that is needed to provide a level, firm seedbed. Be sure to use only a custom mix of the specified seed mixture. The use of a waterway or pasture mix is not allowed and can compromise the cost sharing for the entire project. Be sure to apply fertilizer at the rates specified. Although mulch is always required outside the spring and fall seeding dates, it is always recommended. Use straw, stalks, strawy manure or other similar material. Usually, a manure spreader does a good job of spreading the material.

Once the job is completed, bring in all of your bills to the agency in which you are sharing cost. All bills must be show the dates of work, material supplied, amount of work completed. Other items may be required.

It is always our desire to assure that you end up with a quality project. We want to see you pleased with your project. It is also our requirement to assure that the American taxpayer is getting what their money's worth.

“Stop before you tile”

By Jim Ritterbusch

With a very wet, cool spring and slow planting season, many farmers are considering some additional drainage or tiling. Before you contact your tiling contractor we would suggest that you come into the office and discuss your drainage plans. In most instances tiling in an existing crop field is ok to do. But many times additional or new tile is planned in areas that are considered wetlands. Before you tile we would want to look at the site to verify that it is not a wetland. Once a wetland is destroyed it could impact your USDA eligibility.

Swampbuster is still part of USDA's conservation compliance. Landowners should check with NRCS before doing any drainage work, and we are doing our utmost to get to all the requests as quickly as possible.

Here are key points to remember:

- The 1985 and subsequent Farm Bills prohibit USDA farm program participants from draining or improving wetlands for crop production purposes. Maintenance of existing drainage systems to the same "extent" that they existed prior to passage of the 1985 Farm Bill is allowed in most cases.
 - USDA farm program participants are responsible to self certify their compliance with the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Compliance requirements of the farm bill through the form AD-1026 - HIGHLY ERODIBLE LAND CONSERVATION (HELIC) AND WETLAND CONSERVATION (WC) CERTIFICATION.
 - USDA farm program participants are not required to notify NRCS prior to maintaining existing tile systems BUT are responsible to document the "scope and extent" of any existing tile system that is being maintained. If there are questions in the future about the drainage maintenance that was installed the "burden of proof" will be on the USDA farm program participant.
- NRCS recommends that USDA farm program participants contact them three months prior to the beginning the maintenance or installation of drainage practices to discuss the potential impact on eligibility for USDA programs. Wetland compliance, which began with the 1985 Farm Bill, is still in effect. Altering wetlands from crop production can jeopardize most of your USDA program benefits. And those benefits are substantial, because they include the Farm Loan programs and Disaster Assistance in addition to commodity price support programs available through USDA.
- Stop by the office and we will be glad to talk about your drainage plans.

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*These sponsors contribute to the cost of printing this newsletter.
Please keep this directory with your telephone book.*

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