



CONSERVATION News

K3SWCD OFFICE HOURS:
M-F 8am—4:30pm

SUMMER 2019 NEWSLETTER

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Regular board meetings are held the second Monday of each month at the District office and are open to the public.



Cover Crops in the 2019 Season

By Dakota Behrends, Conservation Assistant

When will it stop raining? Will I get all my crops planted? Can I plant my soybeans as a cover crop? What programs will assist me with the cost of cover crops? No doubt these questions and so many more have come up after this crazy year. Cover crops are a fantastic way for farmers to protect their fields, not only those that are prevented plant but all their other fields as well. The Midwest Cover Crop Council (MCCC) has been a great tool to answer many of the questions on species, seeding dates, seeding rates, etc.

The USDA has changed quite a few things this season which makes decision making even more difficult. One of the biggest concerns and questions farmers have had is on planting their soybean and corn seeds they can't return. Corn can be used as a harvestable cover crop only if it is to be used for silage, it cannot be used for grain or seed. Soybeans can be used for a cover crop as well and many producers are mixing them with their cover crop seed mix. However, always check with a seed salesman prior to

planting the leftover or bin run seed to make sure no contracts or Plant Variety Protection (PVP) rights are being violated.

Planting should ideally be done with a drill in a no till field, as tillage negates most the benefits of cover crops. However, if the field has been tilled the seed can be broadcast or aerial dropped into the field. Herbicides can be used on cover crop corn; however, if it is being used for silage, haylage or *(continued on page 2)*

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Cover Crops in the 2019 Season

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baleage later, then the herbicide needs to support that. Check with a seed salesman, NRCS employee, or the Midwest Cover Crop Council Selector Tool (<http://mccc.msu.edu/selector-tool/>) for the suggested seeding rates, dates, and species for your area.

Terminating these crops is essential for the next economic crop to be successful. Producers can hay, graze or cut for silage, haylage or baleage on prevented plant acres after September 1 for the 2019 year ONLY. Herbicides, rolling or crimping the plants, and plowing into the soil are all common options for termination. Producers need to be sure the plants do not seed out as it will cause problems in the next crop. Mowing after flowering is a great option to avoid seed heads. Using a termination method that leaves residue on top of the soil is the best option and most beneficial when using cover crops, as it gives the soil the most protection.

Paying for the added input is usually the first factor on a farmer's mind when cover crops are suggested. Rest assured there have been a couple cost-share programs that have aided producers in establishing cover crops this year on their prevented planting acreage and a pilot program to

assist on traditional acreage. The IDOA FY2020 PPCC program monies were allocated in under 10 days at \$5 per acre. The Kankakee SWCD offered \$20 per acre with a max of \$1,000 per operator to those with prevent plant acres with the money being fully allocated at the beginning of July. These programs have closed; however, the Fall Cover for Spring Savings program is just getting started here in Illinois. This program is based off of the pilot program in Iowa that offers farmers a \$5 per acre reward on crop insurance for planting cover crops. This reward can't be on acreage that is prevent plant or enrolled in any other government programs. There will be an acreage cap per person and a 50,000-acre state maximum for the pilot year. The cover crops must be reported to the FSA office by December 15, 2019. Applications will be filled out online by the producer and will be open from December 15, 2019 to January 15, 2020 or until money is allocated. The producer will then need to sign up for their crop insurance by March 15, 2020 which will reflect their cover crop reward from 2019. All program details are yet to be released, so be sure to continue checking our website or visiting with the District employees for updates!

Feel free to call (815) 937-8940 ext. 3 with any questions, or visit www.kankakeecountyswcd.org.

Farmer Spotlight: Bret Perreault

By Dakota Behrends, Conservation Assistant

Bret Perreault of Perreault Farms, Inc. (AMPAT Farms) seems to dabble in about every aspect of conservation. He is a part of the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) offered through the NRCS which promotes various forms of conservation.

Bret has expanded his conservation practices since initially signing up for CSP and now uses almost all forms of tillage on his farm. Soybeans are always no till, while corn tends to be conventional, strip, or vertical tillage. Bret has started to move towards vertical tillage for most of his corn fields as it allows for more seed to soil contact. This has assisted him in cutting down the population he seeds which in turn saves him money for a higher germination rate. His nutrient applications are split with the only fall application being nitrogen directly knifed into strip tillage.



Farmer Spotlight: Bret Perreault

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Using variable rate nutrient application for the past 15 years has allowed Bret to eliminate hot zones and equalize his fields for a more blanket like application throughout. By splitting his nutrient applications, the nutrient run off is significantly decreased. Nutrients are kept in the soil and available to the plant. Keeping detailed yield, input, and soil test records has allowed Bret to see the changes in his numbers, profits, and soil health over the past 18 years.



Not only has Bret been increasing his soil health through his tillage and nutrient practices, he also sees benefits through his filter strips, field borders, and cover crops. However, his proudest conservation effort, especially this year, is his pollinator field that was in full bloom when I visited. The field had a rough start 4 years ago but has since taken off beautifully. There are about 7 different species of native flowers and various grasses in the drier area. The eastern border of the field is a wetter soil, so it was

seeded with a different mix that contains more grasses that can sustain the extra water. There are also 2 beehive boxes placed in the field. The bees aid in pollination and should have some honey ready in the next few months.

Thank you, Bret Perreault, for taking the time to discuss your conservation practices and show me around your farm!

4 Teachers Receive “Conservation Kits”

By Crystal Sauder, Conservation Assistant

This year, the Kankakee County Soil & Water Conservation District started a new program offering “Conservation Kits” to educators in Kankakee County. Teachers applied for one of four Conservation Kits that focused on soil health, water quality, native plants, or insects. Each kit includes classroom and field equipment to help engage students in local conservation issues.

Right: Michael Matthews teacher at Kankakee High School in Botany, Biology, Zoology, and Forensics.



4 Teachers Receive “Conservation Kits”

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In addition to the Conservation Kits, teachers will receive hands-on training and additional resources for utilizing the equipment. District staff will visit each classroom during the 2019-2020 school year for a fun activity catered to the teacher’s kit and curriculum! Conservation Kits will allow for hands-on, engaging activities to help students make important connections to the environment around them.

Four Conservation Kits were awarded this year. Congratulations to **Michael Matthews, Katherine “Ellie” Webster, Heidi Pommier, and Daya Snapp!** Michael Matthews teaches zoology, botany, and biology at the Kankakee High School and will be awarded an Insect Collection Conservation Kit. Katherine “Ellie” Webster and Heidi Pommier, who teach science at Kennedy Middle Grade School, will also receive Insect Collection Conservation Kits. Daya Snapp teaches enrichment classes at Je-Neir Elementary School and will receive a Native Plants and Herbarium Conservation Kit. Our District is looking forward to working with you and your students to promote conservation in our county!

If you’re interested in learning more about the Kankakee County SWCD’s Conservation Kit program, give us a call or visit our website at <https://www.kankakeecountyswcd.org/conservation-kits/>

*Top Photo: Ellie Webster, science teacher at Kennedy Middle School.
Middle Photo: Heidi Pommier, science teacher at Kennedy Middle School.
Bottom Photo: Daya Snapp, enrichment teacher at Je-Neir Elementary School.*



Calendar of Events

Visit www.kankakeecountyswcd.org to view our online calendar and learn more about the following events! You can find tree, fish, and native plant sale order forms on our website as well.

- Aug 20** Soybean Association Tour at OC Farms
- Aug 26** Carp Permits due to SWCD
- Sept 2** Fish Orders due to SWCD
- Sept 13** **Fall Fish Sale Pickup**, 7:30 am @ office
- Oct 7** Tree Orders due to SWCD
- Oct 18** **Tree Sale Pickup**, 7:30 am @ office

Regular Board Meetings are held the second Monday of each month at the district office, and are open to the public. For updated information about Board Meeting times, please visit our website.

For plant and wildlife identification, teaching resources, citizen science opportunities, K3SWCD activities and presentations, and more educational resources, visit our website and navigate to our “Education and Environment” tab!



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Welcome Dakota Behrends, Conservation Assistant!

We'd like to give a warm welcome to our newest team member, Dakota Behrends! Dakota is a recent graduate of Illinois State University with a B.S. in Agriculture Business. Growing up on her family farm outside of Clifton has really sparked a passion for agriculture and agriculture education. Dakota enjoys working directly with the farmers in their fields and discussing their practices.

Dakota will be helping us with our agriculture outreach initiatives, working with farmers to gather information about conservation efforts in our county, and promoting our District via social media. When she's not working at Soil & Water Dakota enjoys barrel racing, working out, golfing, playing darts, photography, and outdoor activities with friends and family. We are excited to have you on board, Dakota!



2019 Fall Tree & Shrub and Fish Sales



This fall the District is offering 45 species of trees and shrubs and 9 species of fish with varying sizes for pre-order. We ask that Grass Carp Permits are turned into the office by **Monday, August 26th** and the fish sale order forms by **Tuesday, September 3rd**. Fish will be available for pickup **Friday, September 13th at 7:00am**. We ask that you submit your order for trees and shrubs by **Monday, October 7th** to ensure availability. Trees and shrubs will be available for pick-up on **Friday, October 18th from 7:30am-3pm** at the Kankakee County Soil & Water Conservation District Office at 685 Larry Power Road in Bourbonnais.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Emilie at (815) 937-8940 ext. 3 or Emilie.Janes@il.nacdnet.net. Species information and order forms can be found on our website at www.kankakeecountyswcd.org.



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Don't Mow it, GROW IT!

By: Emilie Janes, Resource Conservationist

Illinois Monarch Project coalition unveils comprehensive mowing guide to promote the establishment of vital habitat, while Illinois Department of Transportation continues their strategic roadside mowing routine with pollinators in mind.

Have you noticed some interesting mowing practices happening along highways? Some areas are left to grow, others are mowed, and some areas even have a combination of the two! There's a method behind the madness as the Illinois' Department of Transportation enters its third year executing their strategic roadside mowing routine.

To help revive the shrinking populations of the monarch butterfly and other pollinators, the Illinois Department of Transportation began adjusting its mowing routines along state highways. IDOT began their Operation Habitat initiative in May 2017 by only mowing 15 feet of right of way beyond the edge of the roadway. This approach helps to re-establish plant species that are food and shelter sources for bees, butterflies, and other insects native to Illinois. IDOT saved 80,000 acres of potential habitat through reduced mowing in 2017. This practice increases vital green space, while saving money and time in the long run.

Fast forward to 2019, and IDOT has expanded their Operation Habitat plan to include a more systematic approach to managing rights-of-way habitat. Stephanie Dobbs, chairman of IDOT Operation Habitat and roadside

maintenance manager, visited Kankakee County in June to discuss IDOT's initiatives. She discussed a new multiyear practice called SAVE (Strategically Applied Vegetation Exemption) mowing, a rotational mowing strategy that will help to control invasive plants and allow more native species to grow. In addition to 15-foot safety strips and rotational mowing, IDOT has partnered with Pheasants Forever and NRCS to create habitat projects around the state. A project is even underway at the Manteno interchange in Kankakee County!

In addition to Operation Habitat, IDOT is a part of the Illinois Monarch Project (IMP), a coalition of scientists and eleven organizations and agencies in Illinois. The coalition includes the Illinois Farm Bureau, IDOA, Illinois Corn Growers Association, and more. The IMP banded together to develop mowing resources to help Illinois residents and land managers provide food for pollinators, who in turn do the same for us. Developed with biology and conservation experts, the comprehensive mowing guide provides simple recommendations and guidelines to follow. You can review the highlights on the next page, or access the full comprehensive mowing guide at <http://www.ilfb.org/mowingonthefarm>.



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ILLINOIS MONARCH PROJECT: Mowing Guidelines for Pollinators

June 2019



Highlights:

RESIDENTIAL AND BUSINESS LAWNS, MUNICIPAL LANDS
 Consider letting odd areas grow wild.
 Limit the area of mown lawn.
 Incorporate native plants in your landscape.

ROAD RIGHTS OF WAY (ROW)
 Mow only with permission from management entity.
 Mow no more than necessary to maintain vision and safety.
 Mow no more than 1/3 of road ROW in a given year.
 Do not mow May 1st—June 30th and August 15th—September 30th
 Mowing mid-summer promotes new, tender leaves that monarchs prefer.

NOTE: Interstates and state highway ROW are managed by IDOT and should NOT be managed by private citizens!



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2019 Summer Highlights



Ag Professionals Breakfast at the Kankakee County Fairgrounds
 At the beginning of August, Dakota attended the Ag Professional's Breakfast hosted by the Kankakee County Fair. Dakota was given the opportunity to speak and she introduced our District and mission, what we offer, and the current programs available. She promoted the upcoming *Fall Cover for Spring Savings* program that will be piloted this fall. Afterwards, John Gooding approached her for an interview with WGFA Ag Connections. This was a great plug for the District with local farmers and businesses!

ISA Hosts International Soybean Buyers to Discuss Sourcing Sustainably

At the end of June, Jeff O'Connor, District Chairman, and Emilie Janes, Resource Conservationist, discussed sustainable soybean production with international soybean buyers from China. The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) hosted the event at their headquarters in Chicago. O'Connor and Janes discussed Illinois as the leader of soybean production in the United States, and the dynamic role of Soil & Water Conservation Districts in conservation and agriculture. SWCDs also promote the use of regenerative farming practices, of which cover crops and reduced tillage systems were discussed at the meeting. Buyers were interested in learning about the S.T.A.R. Program, a program that counties across Illinois (including Kankakee) are using to score and rank farmers on their cumulative conservation efforts in a given field. Of course, the soybean buyers were keen to learn how our current weather conditions have affected the establishment of soybeans in Illinois, and how that will affect the market.



It was a fruitful experience for all parties involved, and our District hopes that we can raise awareness about the importance of regenerative farming, and about Illinois' as a leading producer of crops like corn and soybeans.

Protect the Pollinators – It Makes Cents!



In March, Midland States Bank and the Kankakee County SWCD visited 2nd and 3rd grade science classes at Taft Primary School. We discussed native plants and pollinators and their importance to agriculture and the environment. Each student decorated a biodegradable cup, planted native flower seeds, and grew them to hand out on Earth Day at Midland States Bank in Kankakee! Kris Junge, banking center manager at Midland States Bank, and her colleagues worked with the students to determine the costs of planting flowers, and ways to make and save their own money. Thank you to Midland States Bank for letting the Kankakee County SWCD join and bring this great program to the youth in the county!

Our Mission at the Kankakee County Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide leadership and coordinate programs focusing technical, financial and educational assistance to help the landowner and the public protect, preserve and enhance our natural resources.

SUBSCRIBE to our email newsletter and District updates today! Call (815)937-8940 ext. 3 or email Emilie at Emilie.Janes@il.nacdnet.net!

