



# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

## Indiana Natural Resources Conservation Service

Indiana's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Provides Innovative Conservation Solutions to Restore, Enhance and Protect Indiana's Lands.



For more than 80 years, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has worked with farmers and landowners to help them manage natural resource concerns on their land and improve the health of their communities. Despite the multitude of challenges 2020 presented, that work continued thanks to the extraordinary effort of our statewide staff. Even as our

workforce was forced to work remotely for most of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they continued to impact and help farmers and landowners throughout the state of Indiana. More than 1,000 contracts were signed for our technical and financial assistance programs putting more than \$40 million of assistance into Indiana in order to protect and improve our soil, water, forestry, energy and wildlife resources. I am pleased to provide this report of Indiana NRCS' investments and successes in fiscal year 2020 to highlight what can be accomplished no matter the circumstances.

- Jerry Raynor, State Conservationist

### AT A GLANCE: Investments on Private Lands



#### Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

*Wetland Reserve Easements*

**Contracts .... 21**  
**Acres ..... 2,231**  
**Dollars ..... \$9,762,353**



#### Conservation Stewardship Program

**Contracts .... 122**  
**Acres ..... 74,117**  
**Dollars ..... \$8,145,884**



#### Environmental Quality Incentives Program

**Contracts .... 958**  
**Acres ..... 146,607**  
**Dollars ..... \$25,476,808**



#### Regional Conservation Partnership Program

**Contracts .... 42**  
**Acres ..... 5,531**  
**Dollars ..... \$609,435**

# FINANCIAL & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

## AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENTS PROGRAM (ACEP)

### Wetland Reserve Easements

<i>New Applications</i>	21 applications for 2,231 acres
<i>Closed Easements</i>	17 closed easements
<i>Restoration Completed</i>	24 easements
<i>Compatible Use Authorizations</i>	57 approved
<i>Onsite Monitoring Reviews</i>	149 easements
<i>Offsite Monitoring Reviews</i>	727 easements

## CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (CSP)

<b>Ag Land Renewals</b>	\$750,605	6,122 acres	9 contracts
<b>Beginning Farmer</b>	\$509,686	2,406 acres	9 contracts
<b>General</b>	\$5.8 million	62,280 acres	45 contracts
<b>NIPF* Beginning Farmer</b>	\$53,984	172 acres	2 contracts
<b>NIPF* General</b>	\$968,580	2,584 acres	36 contracts
<b>NIPF* Renewal</b>	\$25,131	162 acres	2 contracts
<b>Grassland Conservation</b>	\$35,255	391 acres	19 contracts
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8.1 million</b>	<b>74,117 acres</b>	<b>122 contracts</b>

## ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

<b>Beginning Farmer</b>	\$1.4 million	2,810 acres	43 contracts
<b>Disaster Recovery</b>	\$1,199	1 acres	1 contracts
<b>Great Lakes Restoration</b>	\$359,733	5,116 acres	27 contracts
<b>Limited Resource</b>	\$66,239	266 acres	9 contacts
<b>Locally Led/Planning</b>	\$19.9 million	125,880 acres	681 contacts
<b>Mississippi River Basin</b>	\$5,529	107 acres	2 contracts
<b>Monarch Butterfly</b>	\$106,867	85 acres	10 contracts
<b>National Water Quality</b>	\$602,251	4,268 acres	12 contracts
<b>On-Farm Energy</b>	\$54,155	208 acres	7 contracts
<b>Organic</b>	\$193,961	1,831 acres	9 contracts
<b>Socially Disadvantaged</b>	\$131,142	167 acres	4 contract
<b>Specialty Crop</b>	\$295,213	207 acres	34 contracts
<b>Western Lake Erie Basin</b>	\$715,747	3,548 acres	23 contracts
<b>Wildlife</b>	\$1.6 million	2,113 acres	96 contacts
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$25.4 million</b>	<b>146,607 acres</b>	<b>958 contracts</b>

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)

<b>Big Pine Watershed</b>	\$81,358	767 acres	11 contracts
<b>Grasslands for Game/Songbirds</b>	\$21,727	105 acres	2 contracts
<b>WLEB Phosphorus Reduction</b>	\$167,919	2,445 acres	14 contracts
<b>Soil Health on Reclaimed Mineland</b>	\$131,205	1,641 acres	9 contracts
<b>Southern Indiana Young Forest</b>	\$207,226	573 acres	6 contracts
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$609,435</b>	<b>5,530 acres</b>	<b>42 contracts</b>

## CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)

<b>Funding obligated to Agreements</b>	\$2.9 million
<b>Number of Agreements</b>	27
<b>Total Plans developed for new contracts</b>	1,215
<b>Engineering Designs Completed</b>	1,273



COVER CROPS



CONSERVATION CROP ROTATION



NO-TILL



NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT



PEST MANAGEMENT

# CONSERVATION PRACTICES

## Top Ten Applied Practices

1. Cover Crops
2. Conservation Crop Rotation
3. No-Till
4. Nutrient Management
5. Reduced-Till
6. Pest Management
7. Early Successional Habitat
8. Conservation Cover
9. Brush Management
10. Grassed Waterway



## STEWARD OF THE LAND

After retiring from the Army in 2012, Tim Adams and his wife Sandy returned to their 80-acre plot of land in Martinsville, Indiana to settle down. His more than 30-year Army career had taken them throughout the world before he retired as a brigadier general. But the plan had always been to return to Indiana at the end.

For Adams though, the land is more than a home. It is his heritage that he feels compelled to be a good steward of and protect.

Adams' great-great-grandfather settled in what is now Green Township and in 1875 he bought an 80-acre tract of land there. Three years later he bought another 80 acres on the other side of the road. That second track, which has been continuously in the family ever since, is where Adams now lives making it 142 years his family has lived and worked on the tract.

As a young Army major in the early 1990s, Adams worked out a deal with his grandmother to buy the 80 acres still owned by the family in three segments.

After buying the acres, Adams brought in a forester to see what needed to be done and held a timber harvest of mostly walnut. Once he retired from the Army, Adams again asked a forester to check out the woods. This time, the recommendation wasn't just about harvesting timber but doing a full management of the forest including removing invasive species, opening clearings for wildlife and cutting back the grapevines that were strangling the trees.

The forester recommended Adams contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to get help managing the woods. By working with NRCS, Adams was able to enroll in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to receive financial and technical assistance for managing his forests. From 2017-19 the program reimbursed Adams' costs as he hired a forester to manage the woods.

The invasive Asian honeysuckle that once covered the forest floor and strangled out the native species is mostly gone. He also had a timber stand improvement harvest in 2018 which created openings for turkeys, songbirds and bats to flourish in. The open areas will now allow hardwoods such as oak and hickory to take root and replenish the woods.

## SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

180 Tweets



3,631 Followers \*



553 Likes



254 New Followers

221 Retweets



\*Twitter plus GovDelivery



**"It's not like the good Lord is going to make more land. It is important that we leave our land better than we found it so that our kids and grandchildren have a valuable resource."**

**AMY BURRIS**  
BURRIS FARMS  
LOGOOTE, INDIANA



@INDIANNRCS



# WORKING WITH LANDOWNERS

Tending to his 20,000 turkeys spread throughout three houses is a seven day a week job for Kenny Lecocq, as it has been for the past 24 years.

It started as a second job, but after retiring from his toolmaker position, Lecocq, whose farm is in Pike County, Indiana, switched to turkey farming full-time and grew his operation from 12,500 brooding turkeys to 20,000 birds per flock in the finishing stage of their development. A calendar year will see him raise about three and a half flocks of turkeys, raising them from just under 6-weeks-old to about 20-weeks-old. His son Dewayne has joined the business too, raising 6,500 brooding turkeys per flock in the first stages of their life. His cycle is shorter, so he goes through four flocks a year.

As the two operations grew and more than 100,000 birds started coming through the farm each year, waste storage became an issue for the Lecocqs. The cycle of their flocks required that some of the turkey houses had to be cleaned out during the winter when it wasn't possible to immediately turn the manure into fertilizer and spread it on a field. He found his answer through the help of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

"It seems like they're always here to help whenever we have a problem," Lecocq said. "So, it's worked out great I think."

Lecocq started his relationship with the NRCS by enrolling in the

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). His first EQIP contract was signed under the 2002 farm bill and helped him build the first of his manure storage facilities as part of a comprehensive waste management plan. The storage facility was completed in 2007 and can hold the waste from one and a third of his turkey houses. The facility enabled Lecocq to store manure over the winter.

The facility worked for a while, but as his turkey operation continued to grow, Lecocq began looking for another way to store the manure. So, much like when he ran into his first waste management issue, Lecocq turned to the NRCS to help. Working with the district conservationist and agricultural engineer, he signed another EQIP contract which was used to build a new, larger manure storage facility. Completed in 2018, the new facility can hold two full barns worth of waste and still have room for equipment to move around. In all, he estimates the new facility can hold upwards of 800 tons of manure, which they then use to fertilize the roughly 300 acres of farmland surrounding the turkey operation.

Constructing the barn and having a safe, legal way to store the manure would not have been possible without the help of the NRCS and the EQIP contract, Lecocq said, because a project of that scale is unaffordable on his own.

"What I've seen is it's just a big circle. That's really helpful for the farmer," Lecocq said. "It's just been great to work with them."

## EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

NRCS is proud of the dedicated Earth Team volunteers and staff who have committed their time and talents to conserving and protecting our natural resources.

During FY20, Indiana NRCS had the following:

- 1,366 volunteers as individuals or in groups
- 6,613.25 hours valued at \$179,880.40 (\$27.40/hr)

Time dedicated by these volunteers to educational efforts, conservation planning and clerical services saved Indiana NRCS approximate \$296,895 and supported conservation in 76 of the 78 USDA Service Centers in Indiana.



# URBAN ASSISTANCE

At NRCS, we serve all agriculture – large to small, conventional to organic, rural to urban. As American agriculture continues to grow in new directions, NRCS conservation assistance is growing along with it. By bringing cultivation and opportunity to both rural and urban areas, we address many needs - restoring the health of the environment and people.

Agricultural production in Indiana is rapidly being transitioned into urban/suburban lands and smaller-scale or specialty crop farming operations. These farms can pose a threat to water quality, native habitat and healthy, productive soils the same as traditional farms. NRCS recognizes the unique needs of this growing sector and we are working with our conservation partners to address them throughout Indiana.

Indiana NRCS has a history addressing the challenges of conservation and supporting urban farmers in their efforts to achieve a healthy environment and local, healthy, sustainable food for their communities. While many of our programs support all farmers, regardless of how long they have been in the business, NRCS also offers special provisions just for beginning farmers. USDA considers anyone who has operated a farm for less than 10 years to be a beginning farmer.

In addition to our on-going technical and financial assistance, Indiana NRCS has recently funded over \$2.4 million, with non-federal partnership match of over \$1 million, to help meet the needs of urban agriculture. These agreements will bring an additional nine professional conservationists, targeted outreach and technical assistance funding to help local conservation and agricultural leaders best address the needs of the farmers in urban communities.

# DIRT SOIL

Know the difference?

Healthy Soil  
Impacts Us All

Learn more at  
CCSIN.org

#LOVINSOIL

## CCSI SOIL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

Soil is quite literally the foundation of where we live, work and play. We believe that by pulling together and pitching in, we can all make a significant difference in improving its quality – and the quality of life for everyone.

The Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI) created a brilliant billboard campaign titled “#LovINsoil” to provide awareness and education about soil health for everyone across our state.

If you’ve seen this billboard, maybe you’ve been curious about “dirt” that might be in your yard or mixed in with your mulch - and the deep, rich healthy SOIL that’s been cultivated with rich nutrients and is good for so many purposes.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD), NRCS, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), the Indiana State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB), and Purdue University Extension Service provides the framework to jointly carry out the CCSI program.

## 2020 NACD GRANT RECIPIENTS

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

As with previous years, in 2020 NRCS entered into an agreement with the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) to provide funding to enhance conservation district technical assistance across the nation, with a significant portion of the granted funds awarded directly to conservation districts to hire staff where additional capacity is needed to improve customer service and reduce workload pressure. Congratulations to the following recipients:

- Allen County SWCD
- Benton County SWCD
- IASWCD
- LaPorte County SWCD
- Parke County SWCD
- Putnam County SWCD
- Tippecanoe County SWCD
- Washington County SWCD

### URBAN AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION GRANT INITIATIVE

In addition to the Technical Assistance grants, NACD and NRCS also administered the Urban Agriculture Conservation (UAC) Grant Initiative in 2020. This grant is designed to enhance districts’ urban agriculture conservation technical assistance activities in developed and developing areas of both urban and rural communities. Congratulations to the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District for receiving a 2020 UAC grant.

