



partnerships for healthy rivers



February 2022 • Monthly Update

Collaborating Watershed Organization Update



St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative

Mission: To improve water quality in the St. Joseph River Watershed by promoting economically and environmentally compatible land uses and practices

The St. Joseph River watershed encompasses 694,400 acres of land in northeast Indiana, northwest Ohio, and southcentral Michigan. With its headwaters in Hillsdale County, Michigan, the St. Joseph River flows in a southwesterly direction for over 100 miles until it meets the St. Mary's River in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The junction of the St. Joseph and St. Mary's Rivers is the birthplace of the Maumee River, which, in turn, flows from Fort Wayne to Lake Erie. The St. Joe River and its tributaries encompass 436 stream miles. The present-day river is wide, relatively slow and most of tributaries are considered warm-water streams. The lower 13.7 miles of Cedar Creek is on the Indiana List of State Natural and Scenic Rivers.

Agriculture is the predominant land use activity in the watershed with approximately 64% in

cropland and 15% in pasture or forage. Woodlands and wetlands comprise 10% of the land, while the remaining 11% consists of several other uses. Fort Wayne and Auburn Indiana are the largest and second largest cities in the watershed. The population is increasing throughout the watershed, especially in southern DeKalb and Noble Counties, and in northern Allen County, where rural residential use is increasing dramatically. The St. Joseph River serves as the drinking water supply for over 250,000 people in Fort Wayne and New Haven, Indiana.

In 1995, the Environmental Working Group's report *Weed Killers by the Glass* documented the presence of pesticides in Fort Wayne's tap water. This was a wake-up call that spurred the city, county and concerned citizens from across three states to join forces and work together to improve the quality of water in the St. Joseph River. The Conference on the Three Rivers in Fort Wayne during 1996 was the site for birth of the **St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative Partnership**.

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Partner Update



Science tells us that moving toward a regenerative agriculture system by improving nutrient management and rebuilding soil health in farm fields can deliver dramatic benefits for farmers—and improve environmental outcomes. Research also tells us that focusing our efforts on in-field practices alone is not enough.

We need to improve conservation opportunities at the edges of the farm fields, too.

Learn more about edge of field practices at: nature.org/EdgeofField.

Upcoming Event



Going Green for Ag Addressing Today's Ag Nutrient Crunch

March 17, 2022, 9:00 am—3:00 pm

Registration at 8:30 am

The Orchid, 11508 Lincoln Hwy. E, New Haven, IN



Pricing and availability of crop nutrient needs is one of today's biggest challenges for farmers. This event focuses on several aspects of nutrient management, including new technologies, that will help farmers address the challenge and safeguard the environment.

CCH and CEU credits available

Free Admission (includes lunch)

AGENDA

8:30 Registration

9:00 Welcome, Greg Lake, District Director, Allen County Soil & Water Conservation District

9:05 Now More than Ever, Utilize the 4R's in Soil Health Systems, Stephanie McLain, NRCS State Soil Health Specialist

10:00 Innovative Technologies to Safeguard Our Local Waterways; Press Conference, Jerry Raynor, NRCS State Conservationist, Anne Marie Smrcheck, President, MWA

10:15 Break

10:30 New Approaches to Nutrient Recycling, Theresa Dirksen, Mercer County Ag Solutions Coordinator & Rick Johnson, Applied Environmental Solutions

11:30 Lunch, The Latest on Today's Ag Nutrient Supply Status and Pricing

12:30 Exploring New Edge of Field Technologies, Andrew Pursifull, NRCS NE Indiana Area Engineer & Stephanie Singer, Agriculture Outreach Specialist, The Nature Conservancy

1:20 Plugged Up? Getting to the Root of It, Derek Thompson, Dekalb County NRCS District Conservationist

2:10 Perspectives on Approaching Today's Ag Nutrient Crunch, Farmer Panel

2:50 Closing Remarks, Dan Wire, Board Member, Maumee Watershed Alliance

3:00 Dismiss

RSVP preferred but walk-ins welcome. To RSVP, call the Allen County Soil & Water Conservation District (260-484-5848 ext. 3) or email AllenSWCD@gmail.com

Hosted by the Allen County Soil and Water Conservation District, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, The Nature Conservancy, and The Maumee Watershed Alliance



The USDA and its partners are equal opportunity providers, employers, and lenders.

Maumee Watershed Alliance Awarded Conservation Innovation Grant

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is awarding more than \$500,000 to innovative approaches and technologies to improve conservation in Indiana under the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program and a portion of \$300,000 in a collaborative CIG project led by the state of Michigan. Nationally, \$15 million is being awarded to conservation partners across the country for 19 projects. The funded projects focus on helping agricultural producers mitigate the effects of climate change and increase the resilience of their operations. Many of these projects will focus on providing conservation benefits for historically undeserved producers.

CIG is a competitive program that supports the development of new tools, approaches, practices and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands. Through creative problem solving and innovation, CIG harnesses the expertise, resources and capacity of partner organizations nationwide to help boost natural resource conservation on private lands and support climate smart agriculture.

The Maumee Watershed Alliance (MWA) will demonstrate phosphorus recovery technologies with the goal of demonstrating an 80% total phosphorus removal over extended demonstration periods. The demonstrations will be conducted at three locations with three different manure waste systems: deep-pit swine, dairy and mixed manure lagoon. The MWA will also explore the market value of recovered products from the lagoon to serve as a cost recovery mechanism and facilitate large scale adoption of the practice. Michigan and Ohio are also included in this CIG project.

"Innovation is key to addressing the climate crisis and conserving the natural resources we all depend on," said NRCS Indiana State Conservationist Jerry Raynor. "CIG partners are using the latest science and research to come up with solutions that work for Indiana farmers and foresters and help ensure the longevity of American agriculture."

[Maumee Watershed Alliance](#)

YOU CAN HELP!

Your donations support current and future efforts in water quality, community engagement and education, and the projects of the MWA and partnering watershed organizations.

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