



WAYNE COUNTY  
**Soil & Water**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

**Thank you, Wayne County, for another successful year of conservation on the ground!**

*The Board of Supervisors and Staff would like to extend our sincere gratitude for the focus on land and natural resource concerns throughout the county.*

2025 was a great year for cover crop and pollinator habitat implementation with over 1700 acres planted with cost-share from our Clean Water Indiana grant, "Cover It, Wayne County!"

The SWCD took 9 free soil samples at small scale farms through a program by the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. We hope to continue into 2026! This year also kicked off the start of a two year water quality study within the Upper East Fork of Whitewater River. A steering committee was formed and water sampling began in spring.



Over the summer staff and volunteers assisted in fish sampling, making for great days away from the desk! News and Updates for the study will be posted to our website.

As we look forward into the new year, we are happy to announce a website refresh and contact upgrades.

Feel free to check out the website and sign up for email notifications. We are open to feedback and look forward to hearing from each of you.

PHOTOS OF FISH SAMPLING ALONG THE WHITEWATER RIVER





# ANNUAL SUPERVISOR ELECTION

## TWO ELECTED TERMS OPENING

This year's election features two open positions. Mat Berger's resignation in October left his position vacant for the remaining one-year term, which the board temporarily filled with Julie Berger until the election. Additionally, Jason Ward's departure will leave his seat open for a three-year term. In the upcoming election, ballots will be cast, with the nominee receiving the highest number of votes elected for the three-year term, while the other nominee will complete the remaining one-year term.

The election committee is comprised of Travis Frame, Jim Austerman, and Caryn Sebring. Nominations will be accepted from the floor during the meeting.

If you or someone you know is interested in the Soil & Water Conservation District and wishes to get involved, please reach out to a staff or board member. We encourage community members to join our board as associates or volunteers as a pathway to participating on the board or committees.



## JULIE BERGER

I live in Fountain City, Indiana, with my husband and our three daughters. My husband and I work both on and off the farm, raising corn and soybeans, maintaining a Shorthorn cattle herd, and operating a small feedlot. Agriculture is central to our family's life, and we are passionate about supporting practices and programs that strengthen our local farming community. I believe strongly in protecting and preserving our farmland for future generations. Healthy soil, clean water, and responsible land stewardship are essential to the success of our local farms.

## JASON ROLL

I am a fourth generation farmer in northeastern Wayne County. My family and I use no-till and implement several conservation practices focused on soil and water quality to raise corn and soybeans. I graduated from Purdue University in 2005 with a Bachelors of Science in Agricultural Education. As a past Agricultural Science and Business Educator and FFA Advisor, I know the importance of educating the future generations on conservation and preservation. I feel that the work that the Soil and Water Conservation District does in promotion and education for protection and conservation of our local natural resources is critical for long term sustainability.







A sunflower found on one of our many small-scale farms in Wayne County.

## 78<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING & BANQUET

The Wayne County SWCD invites you to celebrate Conservation in Wayne County.



**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2<sup>ND</sup>, 2026**



**Doors open at 6:00pm  
Banquet begins at 6:30pm**

**First Bank Kuhlman Center, Wayne County Fairgrounds**

Enjoy dinner and fellowship as the SWCD holds their 2026 annual meeting.

The evening begins at 6:30pm with a catered meal from Radford's, followed by award presentations, elections and guest speaker, Bob Barr.

**Admission is now \$10**

**Please purchase tickets ahead of time or call for reservations.**

## SWCD HISTORY

**Soil & Water Conservation Districts  
SWCDs**

Sub-divisions of state government charged with the task of educating landowners about the protection and conservation of our local natural resources

Governed by a board of 2 appointed and 3 elected supervisors.

**Hugh  
Hammond  
Bennett**

*The Father of  
Soil Conservation*



Photo Source: National Conservation Planning Partnership



- May 12, 1934 - The worst dust storm in the nation's history swept from the Great Plains to the Atlantic Ocean, devastating our farmland.
- April 27, 1935 - President Roosevelt signed the Soil Conservation Act establishing the Soil Conservation Service, now named the Natural Resource Conservation Service.
- Farm and landowners were skeptical of the Federal Government but considered State and Local Government to be trustworthy. President Roosevelt signed a resolution calling upon each state to organize local districts to promote USDA programs.
- 1940 - Indiana passed the district law. This authorized the creation of SWCDs with a petition process. The State Soil Conservation Board was established to help gather and process the petition of the 92 counties.
- August 27, 1947 - the Wayne County Soil and Water Conservation District was created. Local landowners aim to provide information, prioritize resource concerns, and connect land users with educational and financial assistance for conservation practices.



## Partners in Conservation

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management (SICIM)

Wayne County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)

**823 S. ROUND BARN RD**

**RICHMOND, IN 47374**

**765-966-0191**

The collaborative working relationship offers landowners in Wayne County a centralized resource for all their conservation needs. The FSA staff manages various programs, including:

- Farm commodity programs
- Farm bin and emergency loans
- Conservation and environmental initiatives
- Emergency and disaster assistance

In addition, agencies like NRCS, SICIM, and SWCD provide essential support through educational, technical, and financial assistance. They focus on areas such as:

- Soil and water conservation
- Invasive species management
- Related natural resource conservation

Together, these programs create a safety net that helps farmers ensure a reliable food supply, maintain sustainable operations, and contribute to the year-round availability of a diverse range of affordable, safe, and nutritious foods.

### SWCD MISSION

*Dedicated to assisting  
and educating our  
citizens in conservation  
management through  
proper use of the soil,  
water, and natural  
resources of Wayne  
County for all  
generations.*

### SWCD



LuAnne Holeva, Raquel Baker, Jennifer Brown

**LuAnne Holeva** - Conservation Educator  
Luanne.Holeva@in.nacdnet.net

**Raquel Baker** - District Technician  
Raquel.Baker@in.nacdnet.net

**Jennifer Brown** - District Coordinator  
Jennifer.Brown3@in.nacdnet.net

### NRCS

**Colt VanNatta** - Acting District Conservationist  
Colt.Vannatta@usda.gov

### FSA

**Sarah Boaz** - County Executive Director  
Sarah.Boaz@usda.gov

**McKinnah Harvey** - Program Analyst  
Mckinnah.Harvey@usda.gov

**Caryn Sebring** - Program Analyst  
Caryn.Sebring@usda.gov

### WIPER

Coming Soon!



# Meet your board:



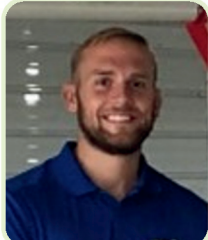
JASON WARD  
CHAIRMAN



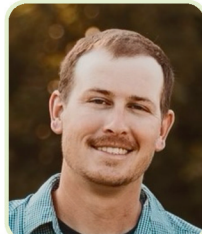
JULIE BERGER  
SUPERVISOR



LISA BIHL  
SECRETARY



MITCH JORDAN  
SUPERVISOR



TRAVIS FRAME  
SUPERVISOR

## MAT BERGER & JASON WARD,



THANK YOU  
FOR **EVERYTHING!**

### SUPERVISORS THROUGH THE YEARS

George Bihl	1985-92
* E. Dale Kirtley	1987-96
* Amos Bertsch	1992-2004
* Josh Turner	1993-96
* Gerald Davis	1994-97
Duane Cates	1996-2006
* Gene Berry	1996-2002
David Williamson	1997-2006
Harold Routson	2002-11
Don Berger	2004-07
Phil Jordan	2004-10
* Tim McConaha	2006-15
David Drake	2006-11
* Duane Smoker	2007-10
Scott McCarty	2010-21
Eric Snyder	2010-18
- Cathy Becker	2011-23
Pam Earlywine	2011-17
Stephen Hayes Jr.	2015-21
Brad Bihl	2017-20
Bill Brown	2019-20
Jason Ward	2020-Present
David Williamson	2020-21
Mat Berger	2021-25
Travis Frame	2022-Present
Michelle Walther	2022-2024
Lisa Bihl	2023-Present
Mitchell Jordan	2025-Present
Julie Berger	2025-Present

- \* Deceased
- NSE Director

**For the full historical list of  
supervisors, check our  
website!**



# UPCOMING SWCD Events

## BOARD MEETINGS:

January 13  
February 10  
March 10  
April 14  
May 12

Changes to board meeting dates will be posted on our website and Facebook page. Contact Jennifer for any accommodations needed or for more information regarding meetings.

## Conservation Focus Workshop

SAVE THE DATE

**March 19, 2026**

Doors open at 8:30am  
Offering PARP!

## WORKSHOPS: (dates TBD)

- Drone Technology Field Day
- Pasture and Livestock Field Day
- Small Scale Farming workshop

## LOOK FOR US AT:

- Earlham Wellness Fair (4/9)
- Family Earth Day Celebration (4/18)
- Wayne County 4-H Fair (6/20-24)

Watch our Website and Facebook for exciting events and offers through 2026!



Check out a few  
snapshots from our  
busy year!





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Sr. Ag Loan Officer  
jcreek@beaconcu.org  
beaconcu.org

**Ryan Edwards**  
Ag Loan Officer  
redwards@beaconcu.org

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Christine Litt, D. V. M. - Sean Card, D. V. M.  
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# 2025 Conservation Education Coordinator Report

It has been a year of change for me. Wayne County officials opted to dissolve the solid waste management district, known as WUR SWMD that served Wayne and Union Counties. This happened in April and created the Recycling Department <https://www.co.wayne.in.us/recycling/>. My assistant was moved to a part-time position to cover this new department, including the City of Richmond's recycling from that point on through 2025. My position continues the work I do with Richmond Sanitary District on stormwater education and outreach to all ages, and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Wayne and Union Counties doing conservation education and outreach to all ages.

This year I worked on writing grants with some success and some failures. Whitewater Valley REMC awarded Wayne County SWCD funds for Conservation Days. This year we had approximately 800 students in attendance to have an outside of the classroom learning opportunity on agriculture, natural resources, safety, and more. Check it out at <https://waynecountyswcd.org/education/conservation-days/>. Another successful grant from REMC was for an improved aluminum can crusher and container for use in Union County at events such as the 4H Fair. Aluminum cans collected at the Junior Leaders booth are taken to be recycled and the funds for those cans go back to the Junior Leaders. This coming year the recycling can crusher container will start making its appearance at events. A third grant through Indiana Department of Environmental Management was submitted for their waste tires grant. This grant was awarded to the Union County SWCD to collect AG Tires in Union County. There had been a need for this type of collection since there had not been once since 2009. This grant focused on off-rim semi-truck and farm equipment tires. On a cold day in December, 320 tires were collected filling 3 semi-trailers. Residents were very appreciative of this opportunity. <https://www.facebook.com/ucinswcd/>

On the stormwater side of things, I continue to enter data for the annual MS4 report for the Richmond Sanitary District and the Richie Recycling Raccoon Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/RichieRecyclingRaccoon/>. MS4 stands for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System and refers to the curb drains you see on streets. This system of pipes moves water/snowmelt quickly off paved surfaces to outfall into our beautiful rivers, creeks, and streams unfiltered and "as is" from the surface. This summer I had a successful outreach at the Wayne County 4H Fair with "stormwater is not rubber duckies." Small rubber duckies had a small card attached to them for folks to learn more about what stormwater really is. You can check it out at <https://waynecountyswcd.org/education/stormwater-education/>. In addition, this year the current issue for Envirothon deals with stormwater. If you are in high school and have a group of interested students that would like to compete in this natural resource based contest reach out to me or go to <https://www.indianaenvirothon.org/>. Contests start out at the Regional level (9 locations this year February-March) and winners from those contests move on to the State Envirothon contest in April. Winner of the State contest gets to compete at the "national" level in July. Your team must have 5 students to compete and place.

With change comes new opportunities. Let's see what 2026 has in store for us all!

**LuAnne Holeva, Conservation Education Coordinator [luanne.holeva@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:luanne.holeva@in.nacdnet.net)**



# 2025 District Conservation Technician Report

by  
**Raquel Baker**

Quite honestly, 2025 was a blur. The past year flew by so quickly, it certainly feels like time races forward without slowing down, although I'm grateful for new opportunities and to be here with my hair blowing in the wind!

The SWCD/NRCS Contribution Agreement continues to be a large portion of my workload. After a few challenges and hiccups this year, the SWCD signed a new five-year agreement for technical compliance status reviews and associated tasks for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

I'll share a few highlights from the years' workshops and field events that fall under my job duties, beginning with the Conservation Focus Workshop, held in March. Sponsors provided the meal for the workshop attendees, and we partnered with Purdue Extension to provide PARP continuing education credits.

The New Paris Pike landfill inspections occurred in April and September, conducted with IDEM Solid Waste staff. In late August, the Pond Clinic was held at Paula Richardson's farm north of Hagerstown, where attendees enjoyed a drone demonstration for aquatic application from Tea Creek Drones and very informative pond and fish maintenance presentations by Justin Curley, Purdue Extension. This pond holds a special place in my heart, I grew up there and it remains in the family today. Chris Beeson, whose family my parents bought the farm from in the early 1970's, was in attendance and shared his recollections from when the pond was built. It's always intriguing to listen to the history of the land from what it is today.

September brought the yearly soil judging practice for area schools, a beautiful fall day where pits were judged at Susan Wilson's farm in the NW part of the county. We appreciate all the help from Susie and her son Trevis in making the soils practice possible! I'd also like to extend a thank you to Jason Crownover for digging the pits and Jason Ward for filling them back in.

2025 also saw several Construction Stormwater General Permit submittals (CSGP) for review. The CSGP is a performance-based regulation designed to reduce pollutants that are associated with construction and/or land-disturbing activities of one acre or more. The SWCD reviews submittals on behalf of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

I am looking forward to the new year's conservation work and programs. First off will be the Conservation Focus Workshop, to be held on March 19, 2026, in the First Bank Kuhlman Center, Wayne County Fairgrounds. We plan to partner again with Purdue Extension to offer Private Applicator Re-certification Program (PARP). One item of note I am pleased to announce for the workshop, through assistance with the Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI) is speaker Rodney Rulon. Rodney began farming full-time after graduating from Purdue University with a B.S. ('94) and M.S. ('96) in agricultural systems management. Rulon Enterprises is a fourth-generation family farming operation which started off as 80 acres in 1869 and has since grown to include over 6,400 acres of no-till corn and soybeans across central Indiana. Rodney will offer a wealth of insight into agriculture budgets and conservation economics during his March 2026 presentation. Watch for updates and the flyers to be distributed in February!

Due to timing conflicts (again) the Drone Technology Field Day was postponed and will be offered in 2026. We have a tentative location and once details are finalized, information will be sent out early in the summer. Also, you may recall in early 2025, the SWCD was awarded a Clean Water Indiana (CWI) grant, Cover it, Wayne County! This CWI grant focuses on cover crops, along with pollinator habitat establishment on ag lands. Interest in the grant has been high, in 2025 the SWCD provided over \$40,000 cost-share in grant funds to thirteen producers for implementation of cover crops, accounting for over 1,700 acres of cover crops planted in 2025 along with a 1.75-acre pollinator habitat planting.

We will begin taking applications for 2026 cover crop and pollinator habitat establishment funding in February; if you are interested, I suggest you contact me ASAP for an application as remaining grant funds are limited.

As always, watch our newsletter, website, and Facebook page for more information on these and other upcoming SWCD events. If you are interested in being involved, we are looking for host sites for soil judging and the Pasture & Livestock Field Day.

Your input is valuable! If you have any ideas or suggestions on workshops/field days, please contact me at **765-373-9542 or [raquel.baker@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:raquel.baker@in.nacdnet.net)**.

Thank you for your interest in conservation.



Conservation  
in Action!



# IMPROVING WATER QUALITY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The Wayne County (Indiana) Soil & Water Conservation District and a group of regional stakeholders are working to protect and improve local water quality in the East Fork of the Whitewater River Watershed.

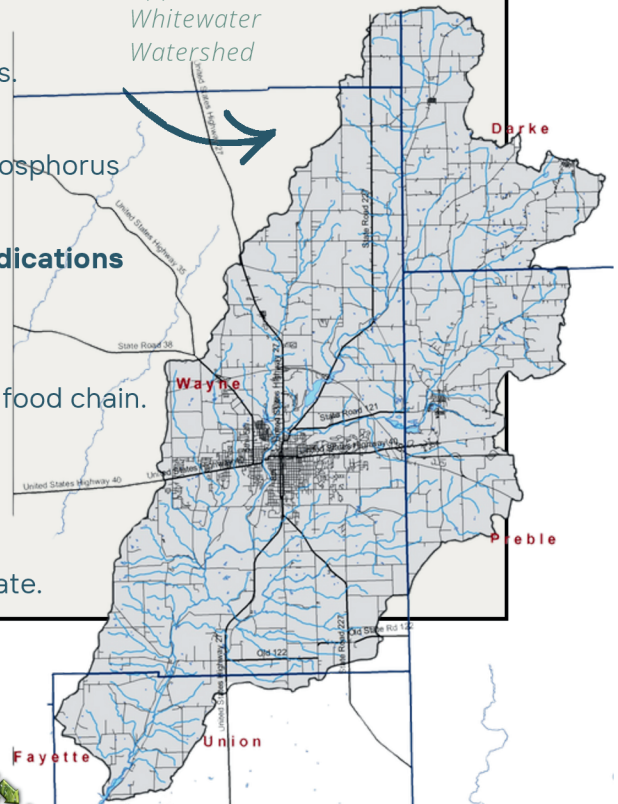
## MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT: THE EAST FORK WHITEWATER RIVER

The East Fork of the Whitewater Watershed is located in eastern Indiana and western Ohio and encompasses the land area that drains into the East Fork of the Whitewater River. The headwaters originate in southern Randolph County, Indiana, and in western Darke and Preble Counties in Ohio. From these headwaters, water generally flows westward from Ohio into Indiana before turning south. As the river moves south, it is fed by numerous smaller streams and tributaries and flows through the Richmond area, gathering runoff from portions of Wayne and Union Counties in Indiana. The East Fork eventually converges with the West Fork of the Whitewater River to form the main stem of the Whitewater River. This combined flow continues southward into Brookville Reservoir before ultimately reaching the Ohio River.

## YOU CAN HELP: AT-HOME WATER QUALITY TIPS (IT'S EASY!)

- **Pick up pet waste**
  - It has bacteria and nutrients that can be bad for the River.
- **Wash your car at a commercial car wash**
  - These facilities can separate out oil and filter pollutants.
- **Use Phosphorus-free fertilizer**
  - Soil in our area is naturally phosphorus-rich. Excess phosphorus can cause algae blooms or fish kills.
- **Properly discard hazardous waste items, including medications**
  - Contact the New Paris Pike Landfill (765) 983-7460.
- **Don't drain oil or antifreeze down a storm drain**
  - These can weaken or kill organisms and accumulate in food chain.
- **Minimize pesticide use**
  - Try attracting natural predators like ladybugs instead.
- **Water early morning or late evening**
  - This is when it is the coolest and less water will evaporate.

Map of the  
Upper East Fork  
Whitewater  
Watershed



These tips brought to you by....



WAYNE COUNTY  
**Soil & Water**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



**Questions? Want to help improve water quality in your area?**

Jen Brown, Wayne County SWCD

[Jennifer.brown3@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:Jennifer.brown3@in.nacdnet.net)

**For more information:**

[waynecountyswcd.org/watershed/](http://waynecountyswcd.org/watershed/)  
(765) 966-0191 x3

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