



**LaPorte County  
Soil and Water  
Conservation District  
Business Plan 2011-15**

## **LaPorte County Soil and Water Conservation District Business Plan 2011-2015**

- Who We Are:** The LaPorte County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a subdivision of State Government. It is a public body which exercises public powers. It is governed by five supervisors, each a resident of the County, three elected and two appointed. The district receives its statutory authority from Indiana District Law (Indiana Code IC 14-32).
- What We Do:** We identify and prioritize local soil, water and related natural resources concerns and provide information, education and technical assistance to help address them. We also connect land users to many other sources of educational, technical and financial assistance to help them implement conservation practices and technologies.
- Who We Serve:** The LaPorte County SWCD serves local land-owners and users with natural resource concerns. We work both proactively and reactively by addressing both concerns that are brought to our attention and those needing prevention.
- Our Mission:** We provide leadership, education, and technical assistance to empower LaPorte County residents to conserve and improve our soil, water and related natural resources.
- Our Core Values:**
- We believe in a voluntary approach to addressing soil, water and related natural resource concerns rather than regulation whenever possible.
  - We will strive to provide excellent customer service
  - We believe that education, outreach and technical assistance are vital tools for addressing resource concerns
  - We recognize that we cannot fulfill our mission unless private citizens take action to implement conservation measures on the land
  - We believe strongly in necessity of robust, locally-lead conservation efforts

### **Our County and its Natural Resources:**

LaPorte County is approximately 383,000 acres, making it the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest county in the state. LaPorte County is unique in that it contains a coastline on the north, a feature shared by only two other counties in the State. The Valparaiso Moraine extends across the county in a northeastern direction and divides drainage into northern and southern areas. The land south of the moraine is made up of nearly level to gently sloping soils and drains south into the Kankakee River. The moraine is made up of gently sloping to steep soils that are well dissected by small drainage ways. The land north of the moraine is made up of nearly level to steep soils that are lacustrine or sandy. It drains north into Lake Michigan. Elevation of the land ranges from 581 feet on the shore of Lake Michigan to about 957 feet above sea level. (Soil Survey of LaPorte County issued January 1982.)

Lying within the highly urbanized and industrialized northwest Indiana, agriculture still makes up over 67% of land use in La Porte County. Urban makes up 29.7% and the remainder is forested. The cropland portion consists mainly of row crops. However, there is a significant amount of specialty crops. Urbanization is occurring throughout the county. The soil variability calls for care in development. Although the cooperative soil survey is completed, on-site investigations are mandatory to insure the best utilization of the land.

## **Our Critical Natural Resource Issues:**

### **Surface water quality** in streams, rivers, ponds and lakes

- Sediment
- Nutrients and pesticides
- E. coli (failing septic systems, waste from livestock including horses, pets and wildlife)
- Combined Sewer Overflows, Storm Sewer Overflows
- Flooding and floodplain encroachment
- Impervious surface runoff (i.e. oil, grease from parking lots, streets, etc.)
- Illicit discharges
- Loss of wetlands and lack of protection of existing wetlands
- Improper Livestock Management (i.e. Pasturing in streams, mortality, waste handling)
- Lack of proper pasture and hay land management

### **Groundwater quality**

- Irrigation management
- Uncapped abandoned wells
- Nutrient management
- Brown field sites
- Failing septic systems

### **Soil Quality** (low organic matter and biological activity)

- Soil erosion
- Excessive cropland tillage
- Lack of crop rotation and cover crops
- Excessive grading and earthmoving activities during construction
- Failure to preserve existing vegetation and topsoil on construction sites

### **Loss of Habitat**

- Critical native pollinators
- Aquatic species of plants and animals
- Terrestrial species of plants and animals
- Invasive species

### **Land use conversion/fragmentation resulting in**

- Loss of prime farmland
- Loss productive forest lands
- Loss of wildlife habitat
- Loss of natural wetlands
- Creation of small acreages: infeasible to farm with no conservation management plan for prevent the spread of noxious and invasive species

- Increased runoff/flooding due to creation of more acres of impervious surface cover
- Damaged/disrupted drainage systems

### **Our Critical Geographic Areas:**

- Little Calumet-Galien Watershed
- Kankakee Watershed

**Five Year Goals** We plan to address the resource concerns outlined above by accomplishing the following over the next five years:

#### **On Agriculture Land:**

- 40% of corn and 85% of soybeans and wheat acres will be managed to maintain at least 30% crop residue on the soil surface after planting.
- 5,000 additional feet of conservation buffers (i.e. filter strips, riparian buffers, waterways) installed
- 5,000 additional acres of cropland will be managed by producers utilizing a nutrient and pest management plan that meet NRCS standards and specifications
- 2,500 additional feet of fencing will be installed to exclude livestock (including horses) from streams and other water bodies
- 5 additional producers will utilize rotational grazing plans for improved forage and pasture management
- 750 additional cropland acres will be managed utilizing cover crops
- 5,000 additional acres of Irrigation management
- 50 additional acres of tree planting
- 125 additional acres of woodland management
- 125 additional acres of wildlife habitat
- 250 additional acres of restored wetlands

#### **On Residential/Commercial Land:**

- Additional woodland management plans consistent with the goals of the Trail Creek and Galena River Watershed Management Plans
- Additional wildlife habitat consistent with the goals of the Trail Creek and Galena River Watershed Management Plans
- Additional acres of restored wetlands consistent with the goals of the Trail Creek and Galena River Watershed Management Plans
- 5 rain gardens installed
- 5 rain barrels installed

## **Our Goals for Working with Other Governmental Entities To Reduce Soil and Water Related Impacts From Land Use Conversion:**

- Cooperating with local MS4s entity to ensure that 100% of Stormwater Protection Plans are reviewed and inspected at least once a year and 100% sites actually following the SWPPP.
- Cooperate with local MS4 entities to ensure that the Rule 5 MOU is fulfilled. Explore further partnership opportunities.
- Cooperate with Health Department to provide education and technical assistance to at least 100 landowners on septic systems maintenance.
- Cooperate with all city and county government agencies to incorporate implementation of conservation practices and technologies into their land use activities.
- Work with the Kankakee River Basin Commission to encourage watershed planning.
- Work with Trail Creek and Galena Watershed partnerships to implement the goals outlined in each watershed management plan.
- Work with the LaPorte County Plan Commission to utilize programs and strategies for farmland preservation
- Provide information/technical assistance to other agencies and local decision makers to increase pervious surfaces on public and private lands.
- Ensure that all local elected officials have been exposed to the District's Cost of Community Service Study.

## **Our Goals for Residential and Commercial Land Users:**

- Provide one annual onsite technical field day
- Utilize Conservation Technical Assistance Cooperative Agreement with NRCS to provide assistance to landowners.
- Provide one annual educational workshop

## **Key Strategies:**

### **Information & Education**

The district will provide conservation information and education utilizing:

- Newsletters (printed and electronic)
- Website
- Brochures and other publications
- Technical Workshops
- Field Days
- Conservation Education Activity Modules
- Seminars and other special events
- Annual Meeting
- Customer Service (daily contacts, phone calls, soil survey, planning specifications, tree planting information, etc.)

### **Demonstrations**

- No-Till, Strip-Till and Vertical Tillage
- Nutrient and Pesticide Application
- Hybrid seed variety plots

- Forage Management
- Forest Management
- Pond Management
- Urban Stormwater Management

### **Marketing & Outreach**

- Promoting conservation programs
- Service Club presentations
- Speakers Bureau
- Radio and TV interviews
- News Releases
- Contests
- Enhanced District Recognition of individuals, partners and groups
- Affiliate Membership Program

### **Technical Assistance**

- One on one conservation planning and application assistance
- Survey, design and installation assistance by regional tech team
- Conservation equipment systems
- Urban conservation

### **Financial Assistance**

- Federal conservation programs (i.e. farm bill programs)
- State conservation cost share/incentive programs

### **Funding**

- County appropriations
- State grants including Clean Water Indiana grants
- IDEM 319 grants
- Other grants, foundations, etc.
- Affiliate Memberships
- NRCS (i.e. phones, computer networking services)
- Affiliate Membership program

### **Capacity Building**

- Supervisor attendance at training opportunities
- Supervisor attendance at IASWCD Annual Conference
- Staff attendance at training opportunities
- Staff attendance at IASWCD Annual Conference

## **Key Actions for 2011:**

- Provide two Riparian Buffer Field Days to public
- Implement Riparian Buffer cost-share program
- Install Galena River Watershed boundary signs
- Provide three informational kick-off meetings for Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program
- Fulfill CTA Cooperative Agreement with NRCS
- Provide one irrigation workshop
- Increase AWEPP Program enrollment per project outline
- Perform irrigation system evaluations and scheduling per project outline
- Initiate a cover crop program
- Provide a presentation on the Cost of Community Services Study
- Initiate a build-out analysis of current zoning ordinances

## **Key Partners:**

- La Porte County Council and Board of Commissioners (continued funding for district staff, programs and office operational needs.)
- All member agencies of the Indiana Conservation Partnership
- Affiliate Members
- Unity Foundation
- The Lake Michigan DNR Coastal Program-continued funding and technical assistance to implement conservation goals
- Save the Dunes-continued education program collaboration and development
- State and federal representatives
- LaPorte County Farm Bureau, Inc.
- Northwest Indiana Regional Plan Commission (NIRPC)
- LaPorte County Plan Commission
- LaPorte Co. Row Crop Food Producers Team
- LaPorte County Conservation Council
- LaPorte County Park Department
- LaPorte City Park Department
- Michigan City Park Department
- Michigan City Sanitary District
- National Conservation Groups such as The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Fund, etc.
- Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry
- Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service

**Desired Outcomes:**

**Impact on District Capacity**

- Increased staffing to meet program goals
- Increased supervisor commitments
- Increased recruitment of Associate Supervisors
- Increased involvement of existing Associate Supervisors in current District programs

**Impact on Operating Budget**

- District's revenue sources must increase and diversify
- Increased reliance on project-based grant funding

La Porte County Soil and Water Conservation District  
2011 Annual Plan of Work

January	February	March
Associate Supervisor Renewals Pay National Dues Advertise Tree Sale Annual Conference Prepare annual financial report (Mar. 31 due date) Prepare public notice for annual meeting Implement Riparian Buffer cost-share program	Audit Financial Records Publish Annual Report Hold Annual Meeting Cooperate with AG Days District Newsletter Advertise Mini-Grant Advertise Scholarship	Staff Evaluations Election of Officers Establish Committees Provide two Riparian Buffer field days Provide three CTA informational kick-off meetings Provide one irrigation workshop
April	May	June
Pay Association Dues Hold Tree Sale Promote Soil and Water Stewardship Week Fair Committee begins planning Install Galena River Watershed Boundary signs	District Newsletter Coordinate 5th Grade Conservation Field Days Coordinate Special Friends Field Day Explore new program needs for fundraisers	Review existing Memorandums of Understanding Perform Tillage Transect/cooperate with Extension Attend right-to-know meeting Prepare County budget (Commissioners)
July	August	September
Host Legislative Breakfast Fair Booth Exhibit and Bossy Bingo Prepare County Budget (Council)	District Newsletter Attend County Budget Hearing Fulfill CTA Cooperative Agreement w/NRCS	IASWCD Conservation Farmer deadline Finance Committee begin budget for following year Begin work on Annual Meeting Review Business Plan and Annual Plan of Work
October	November	December
Begin work on Annual Report Appoint Delegate to Annual Conference Solicit Affiliate Members Begin work on tree sale Appoint Election Committee (Nov. 1 due date) Recommendation for Supervisor Appointment (Nov. 1 due date)	District Newsletter Approve Annual Plan Work Promote Envirothon Approve Budget for following year District Annual Meeting info (Dec. 1 due date) Nominees for Election (Dec. 1 due date)	Select award recipients for annual meeting Mail tree sale brochure and order forms Attend right-to-know meeting Appoint Audit Committee