

SOIL & WATER NEWS

402 N Kays Drive, Normal IL 61761 309-452-3848 extension 3
www.mcleancountyswcd.com



Celebrating 80 Years of Conservation Service to McLean County

The first Soil Conservation District, including nine eastern townships, was organized in McLean County, March, 1942. An election for five district directors was held on May 8, 1942. Frank Hubert of Saybrook was elected chairman; Charles Richardson of Ellsworth, vice-chairman; Byron Kline of LeRoy, secretary; E.D. Hess of Arrowsmith and Harry Miller of Saybrook, directors. This group, with the assistance of Ernest Walker, Extension Specialist, P.E. Cooley and H. W. Turner, of the Upper Sangamon Valley Conservation Association and O.L. Welch, Farm Advisor, met on May 20, 1942 and worked out a district program. More than 80 years later 42 different directors have served McLean County. Today, the McLean County Soil & Water Conservation District proudly preserves McLean County's most valuable resources through financial assistance programs, outreach, and partnerships with federal, state and county officials. Our five SWCD board members include Mike Kelley of Lexington, Chairman, Sally Breese of Lexington, Vice Chairman, Irvin Bane of Bellflower, Howard Heatherwick of Bloomington, and Jeff Mathews, of Downs, Directors. You can learn more about our history of McLean County Soil and Water Conservation on our website.



SWCD Office Hours

Monday-Friday
8:00am to 4:30pm

SWCD Board of Directors

Mike Kelley - Chairman
Sally Breese - Vice Chairman
Irvin Bane - Director
Howard Heatherwick - Director
Jeff Mathews - Director

SWCD Staff

Brett Irwin
Administrative Coordinator
Resource Conservationist
Jackie Kraft
Watershed Coordinator
Ross Fogle
Watershed Conservation Specialist

NRCS Staff

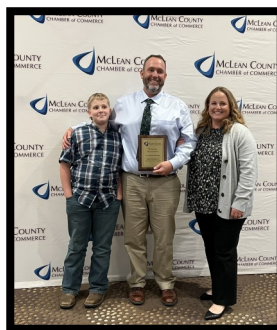
Adam Wyant
District Conservationist
Matt Bell
Soil Technician
Ben Wilson
Soil Conservationist

Pheasants Forever

Brodie Eddington
Farm Bill Biologist

2022 McLean County Conservationist of the Year

Our 2022 recipient of the McLean County Conservationist of the year award goes to a farm family in LeRoy. Their operation focuses on premium-based markets including non-gmo, seed production, farm to table finished beef cattle, and a trucking for hire business. Eric and Jenny Mennenga are the primary owner/operators of Dolly Farms. Their three children, Emily, Ella, and William can be found mowing, building fence, working in the pasture and maintaining trees throughout the farm. They have adopted a no-till and reduced tillage system, accompanied by variable rate fertilizer application and split applied nitrogen application. Their fields are protected by grassed waterways and designed native filter strips have been planted along their creeks and streams. They have protected highly sensitive areas through the Conservation Reserve Program to diversify and promote pollinator and wildlife habitat alike. Emily, Ella and William aren't just great athletes at LeRoy schools, but also great stewards working with their mom and dad to plant more than 300 trees within their rotated cattle pastures.



FFA Soils Judging Contest hosted in McLean County

The Illinois Association Section 9 FFA students competed in the annual Soils Judging contest on September 13, 2022 in preparation for the State competition. The event was hosted at the Illinois State University Farm near Lexington. Seven area schools participated with more than 50 students. First place was awarded to Normal FFA, second place Flanagan-Cornell FFA, and third place Olympia FFA Chapter. The competition's high individuals were 1st place Micah Lanz, Prairie Central FFA, 2nd place Evan Kraft, Normal FFA, and 3rd Place Mary Baker, Normal FFA.



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The McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status or disability. This policy covers all programs, services and procedures of the District, including employment.

The USDA is an equal opportunity employer.

Conservation Cost-Share Opportunities through McLean County SWCD

Partners for Conservation funds are available for conservation installation that will conserve soil and benefit water quality. This funding pool is available on behalf of the McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District. The funds can be used for projects outside of current practices enrolled in an active government contract. Cost share is based on a practice component list that sets expectations for average costs of installation. Cover crop cost share is capped at \$3200 per applicant or 60% of total costs, whichever amount is less. It is important to note that applications must be filled out and approved before seed or other project costs occur as payments cannot be made retroactively. Conservation practices include but are not limited to: cover crops 60% cost share up to \$40/ac-3 year maximum, grassed waterway construction 60% cost shared, water well decommissioning 60% cost shared and new adoption of no-till or strip till 60% cost shared. Learn more or make an application with Brett Irwin. Sign-up before March 31, 2023.



McLean County Contractors & Services List



McLean County contractors can provide conservation services to you for the installation of practices and programs. For a full list of contractors and their services, visit www.mcleancountyswcd.com/new-contractors/. If you would like to be added to our contractors list we have an application also available at our office or on our website. Applications can be returned to our office at 402 N Kays Drive, Normal IL 61761 or to mcleancountyswcd@gmail.com. This is not an inclusive page for all McLean County Contractors and by no means is an endorsement of these companies. McLean County SWCD only provides this information as a resource to the public.

No-Till Drills, Broadcast Seeders, and Tree Planter Available for Rent

Three no-till drills, a three-point broadcast seeder, a tree planter, and multiple hand/UTV broadcast seeders are available for wildlife habitat installation in McLean County. Some of these pieces of equipment were purchased in cooperation with Illinois DNR through Habitat Stamp funds raised by Illinois Hunters. Reporting of habitat installation is required to maintain records of the acres installed. Equipment is owned by the McLean County Pheasants Forever Chapter. A rental agreement, and Pheasants Forever membership is required.

Rental Agreement Details:

- \$250 Security Deposit
- \$150 Daily Charge for Native Seedings with Drills & Tree Plantings
- \$200 Daily Charge for Drill operation on Waterway Seedings
- \$250 Daily Charge for Three-Point Broadcast Seeder
- All Equipment includes a \$100 Weekend charge if not returned by COB Friday
- \$35 Pheasants Forever Current Membership required
- **Copy of Current Seed Tag is Required when equipment is returned**

Equipment Requirements/Specifications:

- Minimum 50 horsepower tractor
- Drills have pioneer ends and 2 hydraulic lines for raising/lowering
- Three Point attachment for broadcast seeder or Tree Planter required
- PTO required for broadcast seeding
- Trailer or pick-up bed required to transport of Three Point Broadcaster
- A hitch pin for drill transportation required (45mph max speed)
- A 2" ball for transport (35mph max speed) of Tree Planter, already on a trailer
- Tree Planter is capable of planting up to 4-5' **bare root trees**
- Drill is 8 feet wide and does 5 feet of planting
- Drills include three seed boxes, capable of planting native & pollinator habitat or food plots





McLean County Soil & Water Conservation District 2022 Conservation Review

McLean County Soil and Water Conservation

The McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District proudly preserves McLean County's most valuable resources. Our desire to protect soil and water, and serve area producers is 80 years strong. The experienced staff and strong dedication to conservation gives landowners professional options and solutions to protect our natural resources. The past and present District Board of Directors has given this county the strong leadership and correct direction to maintain the rich agricultural integrity of McLean County.

McLean County Conservation Services

The SWCD provides many conservation services to the public. Our tree and fish sales are held annually in both the spring and fall. We work with a comprehensive list of native seed vendors for both programmatic and non-programmatic plantings. Farmers and landowners can apply for conservation cost-share dollars and access a list of local conservation contractors and their services. In partnership with the McLean County Pheasants Forever chapter, we offer access to three no-till drills, a three point broadcast seeder and a three point hitch tree planter for habitat installation. McLean County plat books are available at our office. Subscribe to our newsletter lists to learn more about our most current programs and services.



Our 2022 Accomplishments

The following accomplishments were executed in partnership with local partners, and the McLean County farmers and landowners. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) contracts and dollars distributed include the Environmental Qualities Incentives Program (EQIP), and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) in the most recent fiscal year. To learn more about these specific objectives, and additional opportunities, contact our office.

Conservation Objectives	Projects	Totals
Conservation Trees Distributed	125	1,090 trees
Pond Fish Stocking	65	65 ponds
SWCD Contracts and Dollars Dispersed	10	\$26,404
Cover Crops Projects and Acres	7	656 acres
Lake Bloomington Shoreline Installation	2	2,450 feet
No-Till Drill Projects and Acres	21	88 acres
Filter Strip & CRP Tax Reduction Applications	9	81 acres
NRCS Contracts and Dollars Dispersed	19	\$1,165,012 8,911 Acres

SWCD Board of Directors

Mike Kelley– Chairman
Sally Breeze– Vice Chairman
Irvin Bane– Director
Howard Heatherwick– Director
Jeff Mathews– Director

SWCD Staff

Jackie Kraft
Watershed Coordinator
Ross Fogle
Watershed Conservation Specialist
Brett Irwin
Administrative Coordinator
Resource Conservationist

Phone: (309) 452-3848 ext 3

SWCD News

Want to stay up to date with the McLean County SWCD? Sign-up for our **Monthly E- Newsletter** on our website!
Conservation News
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The McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status or disability. This policy covers all programs, services and procedures of the District, including employment.

USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.



McLean County Soil & Water Conservation District 2022 Project Highlights

McLean County Monarch Projects

The McLean County SWCD strives to protect and enhance monarch breeding and feeding habitat along with other regional pollinators. The Illinois Monarch Project has lead the path to save the monarchs. We have taken the pledge and share their goal of adding 150 million new milkweed stems and other nectar resources to the Illinois landscape by 2038. Projects have begun working with the Illinois Department of Transportation to convert roadside vegetation to pollinator friendly habitat. The initial project is located on I-55 on the east side of Linden Street. The project is nearly 1 mile or 12 acres of highly visible road frontage. Since 2021 we have asked farmers to commit an Acre of Habitat for the Farm. **Sixteen landowners took the challenge and implemented 21 acres** of Monarch Mix on their farms across McLean County! Three area schools, including Trinity Lutheran, Lexington and Northpoint 3rd grade classrooms have been awarded grants to begin habitat education program offered to classrooms across the country called, Milkweed in the Classroom. In partnership with the McLean County Pheasants Forever chapter the three schools established butterfly gardens and monitored the success of their plantings in the classroom.



Conservation Outreach

The McLean County SWCD held five outreach events including two wildlife habitat tours, a cover crop meeting, a pond shocking survey demonstration, and an FFA Soils Judging Contest. More than 130 individuals participated in the four field day events. Be on the look out for more conservation tours, outreach events, and programs to come. The following partnerships contributed to these events: Illinois State University, Livingston County SWCD, Illinois Conservation Police, Illinois Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever, City of Bloomington, Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership, University of Illinois Pollinatorium and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



Jim Rutherford Conservation Scholarship

The Jim Rutherford Scholarship was established by the McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District to assist outstanding agricultural students at any Illinois College. The student awarded the scholarship should demonstrate superior agricultural academic achievement, commitment to soil and water conservation and potential for innovation and/or leadership ability. The Jim Rutherford Scholarship is awarded in the fall semester of the academic year. This scholarship fund is made possible by generous donations from local donors. Each year an annual golf outing is held to raise the necessary funds. Help support the next generation of local agri-business professionals! Seventeen local scholars have been awarded since inception for a total of \$8500 to attend 8 different Illinois colleges. To make a donation, please contact our office.



2022 Golf Outing
Champions

SWCD Board of Directors

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Sally Breese– Vice Chairman
Irvin Bane– Director
Howard Heatherwick– Director
Jeff Mathews– Director

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Burn Plans & Burn Permits Required for Controlled Burns on CRP Acres

Management activities should be avoided during the primary nesting season of April 15th-August 1st. Prescribed Burning is used to remove excess litter, promote germination of seed bearing annuals and wildflowers, increase plant diversity, and control unwanted woody cover. Burns must be conducted in accordance with an Approved Burn Plan and IEPA (Illinois Environmental Protection Agency) Open Burning permit. Grassland fields must be established for a minimum of 3 years before initiating burning. No more than 1/3 of the area shall be burned during any year and should not occur more than once every 3 years on any burn unit, unless required to achieve the goals of the burn plan. No mid contract management practice can be scheduled or cost-shared in the last three years of the contract. To apply contact Brodie Eddington at beddington@pheasantsforever.org or 309-452-3848 ext 3 .



Burn Plans and EPA Permits can take up to 4 months to approve. Begin the process now to avoid delays.

Why have your soil tested? Does my soil have problems?

Why have a soil tested? Does my soil have problems? Does my crop need fertilizer? What kind of fertilizer should I use? How much should I apply? A soil analysis can help farmers, landowners and gardeners answer these questions. A basic soil analysis provides information on two important soil characteristics. First, soil pH is a measurement on a scale from acid (low pH) to alkaline (high pH). Most soils are on the acidic side of the pH spectrum. Good soils for crop production are often moderately acidic, but some soils in Hawaii are acidic to the extent that crops grow poorly. Soil tests indicate pH problems and allow recommendations for correcting them. Finally, available nutrient levels in the soil determine how good crop growth will be. Testing for phosphorus (P), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), and magnesium (Mg) helps determine the need for soil amendments (phosphate, and lime or dolomite) and the right fertilizer formulations for the crop to be grown.



Learn more about soil testing services and labs near you by visiting : www.mcleancountyswcd.com/soiltesting/

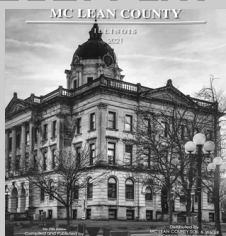
Before you agree to a Timber Harvest, consider a Professional Opinion!

Selective timber harvesting is an important woodland health practice to promote native species and wildlife habitat. Professional consulting foresters are available to assist woodland owners with a variety of forestry-specific needs: Forest Management Plans, Timber Sales, and Wildlife Habitat Projects; and management plan implementation practices such as Crop Tree Release / Timber Stand Improvement, Invasive Species Control, Prescribed Fire, Pruning, and Tree Planting. The University of Illinois Extension Forestry has an incredible website to connect landowners with consulting foresters, woodland information and other resource professionals.

Learn More and Locate a Consulting Forester by visiting the University of Illinois Extension Website's Illinois Directory of Illinois Consulting Foresters.



2021 PLAT BOOKS



\$35

Credit/Debit cards
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McLean County Conservation District

Address: 402 N Kays Drive, Normal IL 61761

Email: mcleancountyswcd@gmail.com

Phone: 309-452-3848 ext 3

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Scan the QR Code to Visit our Website!



State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement– Conservation Reserve Program

SAFE provides an opportunity to develop grassroots cooperative conservation projects to address high priority wildlife needs through habitat restoration. The practices must be used to address wildlife habitat that can be enhanced through the restoration of eligible cropland through CRP. Enrollment is available under continuous and general signup criteria, depending on the practice and cover being established. McLean County is now a SAFE area that allow landowners and producers to qualify for a range of wildlife practices that can be enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program SAFE CP38.

LAND AND LANDOWNER ELIGIBILITY

- Land with a current cropping history with the Farm Service Agency from 2012-2017
- Crop must have been reported 4 of the 6 years within this range
- Landowners must meet the Adjusted Gross Income "AGI" requirement
- Fields must be a minimum of 10 acres or greater
- Contracts begin October 1st of a program year. Contracts can be pro-rated.

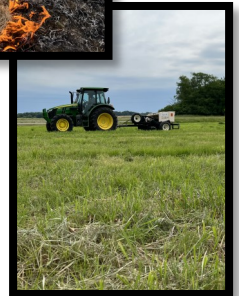
ELIGIBLE PRACTICES

Wildlife Habitat (CP-4D) (CP-2)

- Native grass plantings that may include tree & shrub plantings, and wildlife food plots

Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds – Field Borders (CP 33)

- Establish Native Grasses and Forbs that Average 60-120 ft. Around the Edges of Ag Fields With a Minimum Acreage Requirement
- Field entrances remain open for equipment crossing



McLean County Habitat Trailer

The McLean County Soil & Water Conservation District and Pheasants Forever have partnered to promote wildlife habitat on an enclosed trailer. The trailer show cases scenes of whitetail deer, wild turkeys and ring-neck pheasants painted by artist Ryan Kirby. The trailer's overall message conveys "Think Habitat". Our wildlife and wild spaces of McLean County have many opportunities to be enhanced and created. The trailer will be utilized to store habitat equipment including two three-point broadcast seeders that can be rented from the SWCD office. The trailer is displayed at the McLean County SWCD office parking lot.



Jim Rutherford Conservation Scholarship Application \$1000 Award

The Jim Rutherford Scholarship was established by the McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District to assist outstanding agricultural students at any Illinois College. The student awarded the scholarship should demonstrate superior agricultural academic achievement, commitment to soil and water conservation and potential for innovation and/or leadership ability. The Jim Rutherford Scholarship is awarded in the fall semester of the academic year. The fall 2023 scholarship award will be \$1000. Applications Due Before March 17, 2023 to McLean County SWCD, 402 N Kays Drive, Normal Illinois 61761. Applications and past recipients can be found at: www.mcleancountyswcd.com/jimrutherford/

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Upcoming Events & Conservation Sales

- Conservation Cost-Share through PFC Sign-up deadline is March 31, 2023
 - Conservation Tree Sale Deadline is April 19, 2023 and order pick-up is April 27, 2023
 - Looking to re-stock a pond? Fish orders are due April 5, 2023 and pick-up is April 20, 2023
 - Jim Rutherford Golf Outing will be held on August 8, 2023 at Crestwicke Country Club
- Learn more and find registrations or order forms at www.mcleancountyswcd.com**

Become an SWCD Newsletter Sponsor! For \$150, you will be included on our SWCD Website, monthly E-newsletter, and bi-annual 1600 person newsletter. To sponsor, contact our office at 309-452-3848 ext. 3 or email Brett Irwin at brett.irwin@il.nacdnet.net. Sponsorship begins January 2023 and concludes December 2023.



McLean County Soil & Water Conservation District

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2022 Board Election & Meeting Minutes Notes

The Board of Directors of the McLean County SWCD had their regular board meeting on January 12, 2022 at Davis Lodge, Lake Bloomington. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Kelley at 7:36 a.m. Directors present were Jeff Mathews and Howard Heatherwick. District employees present were Ross Fogle and Jackie Kraft.

Financials/Minutes: December 2021 minutes were presented, Howard motioned, Jeff seconded. Motion Carried. Jeff made a motion to approve the financials, Howard seconded. Motion carried. Jeff made a motion to approve the January checks for payment. Howard seconded. Motion carried. Brett submitted District report, Adam submitted the NRCS report as written, Jackie gave the Watershed report as written: Still waiting on comments from IEPA on the Lake Bloomington/Evergreen Lake watershed plan. A 319-implementation grant was submitted for \$344,654.50 for the watersheds. The Clinton Lake watershed plan has been submitted to IEPA for comments. The Illinois Farm Bureau Nutrient Stewardship grant has been awarded. The grant is to host a field day this summer in the watersheds. Received a FOIA from Stark for the Interloop Drive projected completed last summer. Howard addressed the recent Illinois Farm Bureau call for action on WOTUS. We discussed if the District should submit a comment. It was decided that we would reach out to the AISWCD for guidance and suggestions before a decision was made. Will discuss at next board meeting. Ross gave the District report: The website has been updated to include the new sponsors, new tabs for web soil survey and cover crop tool. The January e-newsletter blast has been sent out. The Conservation Review has been completed and emailed. Old Business: The general election is taking place today at the office. Sally Breese, Irvin Bane and Howard Heatherwick are on the ballot. New Business: The next Board Meeting was set for February 9 th at 7:30 a.m. at the USDA Service Center. The meeting concluded at 8:44 a.m.