



Watershed News

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Summer 2023

Bloomington & Evergreen Lakes

Prairie Restoration at Lake Bloomington



The North Park Prairie restoration project began in the spring of 2022. A combination of prescribe fire, chemical control, and managed mowing were applied to the site to develop a 10 acre habitat area. That summer a mix of pollinator habitat species and native grasses were planted. The partnership was made possible by the McLean County Soil & Water Conservation District, Pheasants Forever and the City of Bloomington. Three additional locations at Lake Bloomington

were later selected for habitat conversion and have been planted in 2023. Evergreen Lake's Equestrian and interpretive nature trail was also chosen as a restoration site. Funding from the Illinois Habitat Fund, through Pheasants Forever, and the Illinois Monarch Rt66 project were contributed towards the efforts. To learn more about active projects, habitat conversion information, and equipment information you can visit our website at www.mcleancountyswcd.com.

2023 Watershed Cropland Tillage Survey

The Illinois Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts, completes a Soil Erosion and Cropland Tillage Transect Survey. The survey aims to gather more information about the implementation of conservation farming practices, and to assess the condition of McLean County. Tillage data is gathered for corn and soybeans, and the county's T levels are assessed. "T" represents the tolerable soil level loss, or the amount of soil that can be replaced naturally by the decomposition of crop residue. In addition to T levels and tillage data, the survey compiles some information on cover crop use. The latest McLean County Transect Survey was conducted in both Evergreen Lake and Lake Bloomington Watersheds on 206 McLean County field locations. Comparable to prior surveys these results suggest the following in each watershed. In Evergreen Lake an increase in conventional tillage and decrease in no-till and mulch tillage practices from 2022. Results on corn acres showed 49% Conventional, 39% Reduced Till, 10% Mulch Till, and 2% No-till. Soybean acres resulted in 41% Mulch Till, 37% No-till, 20% Reduce Till, and 2% Conventional. The cumulative figures were as follows: 100 locations measured, 19 No-Till fields, 25 Mulch Till fields, 30 Reduce Till fields, and 26 Conventional fields. None of the fields showed evidence of cover crop residue. In Lake Bloomington an increase in conventional tillage and increase in no-till but a decrease in mulch tillage practices from 2022. Results on corn acres showed 51% Conventional, 35 % Reduced Till, 10% Mulch Till, and 4% No-till. Soybean acres resulted in 40% Mulch Till, 40% No-till, 13% Reduce Till, and 6% Conventional. The cumulative figures were as follows: 106 locations measured, 23 No-Till fields, 26 Mulch Till fields, 25 Reduce Till fields, and 29 Conventional fields. Less than 2% of the fields contained cover crop residue.

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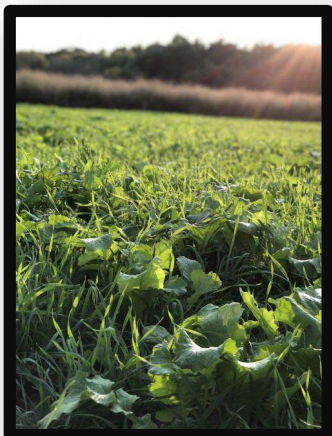
Upcoming Events

Jim Rutherford Golf Outing
8.8.23
Habitat Workshop (LeRoy)
8.24.23
Cover Crop Aerial Demo (Lexington)
9.6.23
Cover Crop Application Deadline
9.8.23

Visit Our Website to Learn More!



Lake Bloomington Watershed Cover Crop Efforts



The Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake Watershed plan encompasses 69,512 acres and provides a road map to achieve water quality targets and stakeholder goals established under previous plans. Farmers and landowners within the watersheds have continued to adopt best management practices and improve conservation stewardship resulting in nutrient reductions. Proven data suggests cover crops will play a key role in improved water quality for our local lakes. Still today, only 2% of the tillable acres surveyed within the watersheds have cover crops implemented. With the help of this program and farmer participation, 519 new acres of cover crops were planted in the fall of 2022.

Cover Crop Sign-up Lake Bloomington/Evergreen Lake Watersheds

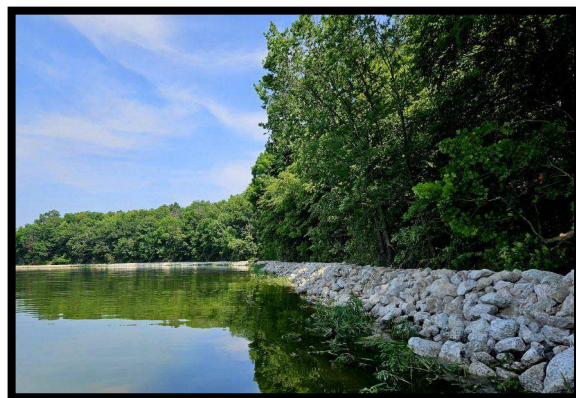


In partnership with the City of Bloomington and the McLean County Soil & Water Conservation District made funding available for new cover crop adoption on fields within the Evergreen Lake and Lake Bloomington Watersheds. To apply call the SWCD office: 309-452-3848 ext 3.

- Funding is available in the order received, Deadline to apply September 8, 2023
- Cereal Rye before Soybeans is recommended, Oats & Radish Mix before Corn is recommended
- New Field Adoption Fall 2023 will be prioritized
- Seed & Application Costs Covered Up to \$55 per acre
- Fields currently enrolled in cover crop incentive and cost-share payment programs are not eligible for funding.

Lake Bloomington Shoreline Restoration Project

Since 2018 the McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District has partnered with the City of Bloomington to combat shoreline erosion by the installation of strategically placed rock. The areas were identified through surveys and watershed planning to be of the largest impact for the Lake's drinking water supply. In 2023 additional protection was implemented on 925 feet of shoreline. The project is projected to be completed with additional areas by 2024.



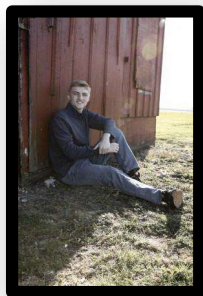
Jim Rutherford Conservation Scholarship Golf Outing



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 students awarded the scholarship demonstrate superior agricultural academic achievement, commitment to soil and water conservation and innovation. 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. Join McLean County SWCD at the annual Jim Rutherford Conservation Scholarship Golf Outing, held at Crestwicke Country Club on Tuesday August 8, 2023. Registration begins at 9:00am, with a shotgun start at

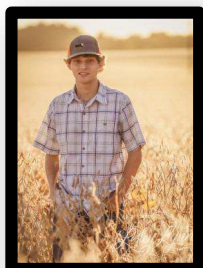
9:30am. You can form a foursome with cart for \$375. Additional details and registration can be found at www.mcleancountyswcd.com. Since 2015, we have awarded 20 local students with scholarships amounting to \$10,500. The McLean County Soil & Water Conservation District Awarded three scholarships this year including (1) \$1000 scholarship, and (2) \$500 scholarships. The proceeds were received through the generous donations of our community, and the annual Golf Outing fundraiser. Special thanks to Hughart Family Limited Partnership and Richard Farms for unwriting two of our scholarship awards last year! If you would like to help us award future applicants, please consider making a donation or joining us for the outing! Additional details and registration can be found at www.mcleancountyswcd.com/jimrutherford/.

2023 Scholarship Awards



Evan Kraft, son of Mark and Jackie Kraft, is a Towanda IL native at Normal Community High School planning to pursue an Agri-Business Major at Illinois State University. Evan is active in FFA as both a member and leadership team officer. He is a National Honor Society member, and athlete in Cross Country and the boy's track and field team. Evan has been a state record book winner in wildlife management and has earned his State Degree. Agricultural instructor, Jennifer Stone writes "Evan has been a critical leader in our department." Congratulations Evan!

Payton Wiltz, son of Brian and Mandy Wiltz, is a Lexington IL native at Lexington High School planning to pursue an agricultural degree at local junior college program. Payton is an active member of the FFA and has served officer roles including sentinel, reporter, secretary and vice president. He is a National Honor Society member, earned his state FFA degree and active on his family farming operation. McLean County Farmer and owner of SDM Farms, Dave Stutzman writes "Payton has a good attitude and is an honest and conscientious person." Congratulations Payton!



Austin Russow, son of Eric and Cara Russow, is a Heyworth IL native at Heyworth High School planning to pursue an Agri-Business Major at an Illinois College program. Austin is active in FFA both as a member and chapter officer. He is a National Honor Society member, 4-H member, Track team member and Livestock Judging team member. Eric Updegraff, Cross Country and Track and Field Coach writes "His work ethic is unrivaled and makes it easy to root for him." Congratulations Austin!

Visit www.mcleancountyswcd.com/jimrutherford/ to learn more!



McLean County Soil & Water Conservation District

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McLean County Cover Crop Aerial Demonstration



Join the McLean County Soil & Water Conservation District for an informational meeting and aerial application demonstration. Speakers will discuss current cover crop cost share programs, the nutrient loss reduction strategy, and cover crop aerial application information.

Save the Date

When: September 6, 2023 9:00am

Where: 20478 N. 2900 East Road

Lexington, IL 61753

Registration Required: 309-452-3848 ext 3