



Watershed News

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Summer 2026

Bloomington & Evergreen Lakes

Lake Bloomington Cover Crop Success

Modeling of a "Nutrient Loss Risk Analysis" identified high and low risk nutrient loss zones "priority areas" of the Lake Bloomington watershed. Farmers within the priority area implemented 815 new acres of cover crops in the fall of 2025. The goals of this collaboration are to evaluate the long-term stream and lake water quality data set of Lake Bloomington watersheds in correlation with the change of conservation on the landscape. The results will generate a firm background of nutrient (N and P) and sediment loss over time. Targeted outreach was distributed amongst farmers within the priority area and technical assistance is being provided to help with cover crop implementation. An incentive of \$65 per acre was provided to farmers for their participation in the program. Funding was provided by the City of Bloomington and the Illinois Soybean Association. Opportunities are now available to farmers to continue the program in the fall of 2026. To learn more about this effort, and further updates you can visit the McLean County SWCD website at www.mcleancountyswcd.com/lakebloomington/ or contact our office at 309-452-3848 ext 3.

Partners and Grant Team: Illinois Soybean Association, Dr. Shalamar Armstrong, Associate Professor, Agronomy Department, Purdue University-Research Director Dr. Rabin Bhattarai, Associate Professor University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign, Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering Partners. Soonho Hwang, Visiting Scholar, University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign, Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering Partners, Michael Ruffatti, Agronomy Department Purdue University, Joe Darter City of Bloomington, Jackie Kraft & Ross Fogle, McLean County SWCD

SWCD Foundation Scholarship Winners

The Jim Rutherford Scholarship was established by the McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District Foundation to assist outstanding agricultural students at any College. Since 2015, we have awarded 27 local students with scholarships amounting to \$16,500.

Jaidyn Ormsbee, son of Josh Ormsbee is of Bloomington IL, at Normal Community High School. He is planning to pursue a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Education from Illinois State University. Jaidyn is a Leadership Team member and mentor in FFA. He is active in scholastic bowl, social studies club, and his local church. Jaidyn writes "My interest and experience with soil goes back to my sophomore year of high school, when I competed in the Section 9 soils contest and got first place. This moment was a huge moment in my high school career, as it was what got me to consider agriculture as a potential career pathway." Congratulations Jaidyn!



Chase Steege, son of Lea Smith and Chad Steege is of Le Roy IL at Le Roy High School planning to pursue an Ag Business Degree at Heartland Community College. Chase is the Le Roy FFA President, and the 2026 senior class president. He has been employed with an organic farming operation in McLean County for six years, learning the importance of conservation practices like cover crops and conservation tillage. Chase writes "I believe that the goal of farming is to produce food while keeping the land, water and ecosystems healthy." Congratulations Chase!



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Upcoming Events

August 11– Cover Crop Management

The workshop will share results of cover crop research from the region that focuses on the impact of infield adaptive management practices in agronomics and the environment. Hear the research from Precision Conservation Management, Illinois State University, Purdue University and more.

Visit Our Website to Learn More!





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New Conservation Practices At the Lakes

The Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake Watershed plan has been approved by the US EPA. It 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. The City of Bloomington has also adopted various practices on both Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake. The McLean County SWCD has completed the IL EPA 319 implementation grant which was awarded for \$344,654.50. A 2.5 acre constructed wetland and saturated buffer were constructed and installed in the Evergreen Lake Watershed in the fall of 2025 on city property. A residential rain garden adjacent to Lake Bloomington was implemented and an additional 1,660 feet of eroding shoreline in Lake Bloomington was protected through shoreline stabilization. These locations were identified through the watershed planning process to make the biggest impacts in reductions of sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen. The McLean County SWCD continues to assist with other conservation practices at the lakes, including tree plantings, prairie restoration, and technical assistance.



Cover Crop Management Workshop

Join us with partners on Tuesday August 11, 2026 from 9am-11:30am at the Lexington Community Center for the facts, finances, and funding of cover crops. The workshop will share results of cover crop research from the region that focuses on the impact of infield adaptive management practices in agronomics and the environment. Hear the research from Precision Conservation Management, Illinois State University, Purdue University and more.

Lunch Provided, RSVP before August 6

RSVP online at <https://bit.ly/4vBQlw4> or call the McLean County SWCD office at 309-452-3848 ext 3



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