

Champaign County
Soil & Water
Conservation District



- ▶ FISH SALE..... 1
- ▶ ELECTION & AM..... 2
- ▶ NEW EMPLOYEES... 3
- ▶ CONSERVATION CROPPING SEMINARS (CCS) ... 3
- ▶ GRAZING 4
- ▶ NRCS PROGRAMS. 5
- ▶ S.T.A.R..... 6,7,8,11
- ▶ PRECISION CONSERVATION MGMT. 9
- ▶ WETLAND 10
- ▶ CRP HABITAT..... 10



SOIL & WATER *focus*

WORKING TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE OUR NATURAL RESOURCES
BUILDING ON THE PAST - PRESERVING FOR THE FUTURE

FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR FOREST LAND - APPLY BY JANUARY 8TH

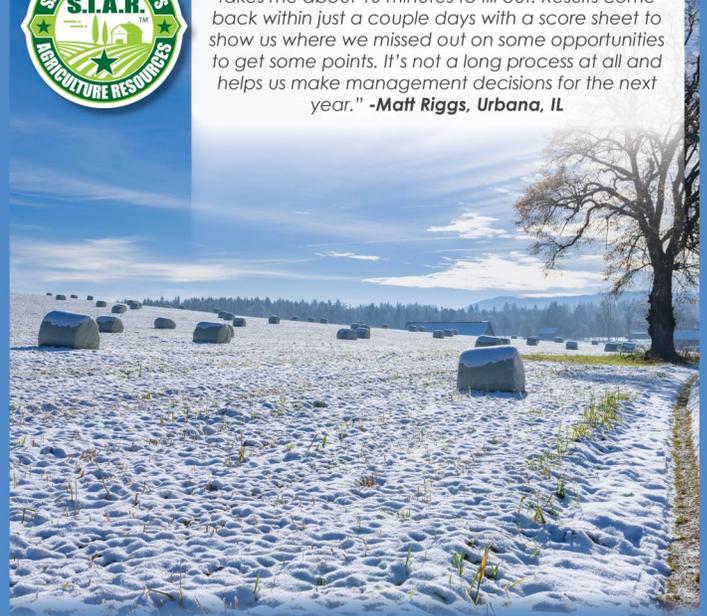
The Headwaters Invasive Plant Partnership (HIPP) has funding available for forest management, habitat restoration, and invasive species control through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Please get your application in today!

RCPP funds will be available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The funds are only available for properties in HIPP's 11 counties in east central Illinois: Champaign, Coles, Cumberland, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Iroquois, Livingston, Piatt, and Vermilion. If you own forest land, ungrazed prairie, or riparian buffers that you would like to conserve or restore, this program could provide financial and technical assistance to help. The limited region for this program paired with the focus on natural areas greatly increases your chances of obtaining funds.

If you are interested in this program, please contact us at hippcwma@gmail.com, 217-352-3536 x 3, or talk to your local NRCS office. Remember the FY2021 application deadline is January 8, 2021!



"We've used S.T.A.R. for two years now and the form takes me about 10 minutes to fill out. Results come back within just a couple days with a score sheet to show us where we missed out on some opportunities to get some points. It's not a long process at all and helps us make management decisions for the next year." -**Matt Riggs, Urbana, IL**



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Submit your S.T.A.R. form for the 2020 Crop Year by February 1, 2021!
See more about S.T.A.R. on page 6

SWCD Board Members

- Joe Rothermel, Chairman
- Steve Stierwalt, Vice-Chairman
- Eric Suits, Secretary-Treasurer
- Eleanor Blackmon, Director
- Lennie Heiser, Director
- Kenneth Kesler, Associate Director

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- Erin Gundy, R.C.
- Hannah McDonald, C.C.
- Erin Cocca, Survey Aide
- Bruce Henrikson, S.T.A.R. Coord
- Clay Bess, PCS
- Renee Weitekamp, A.C.

NRCS Staff:

- Peter Frey, D.C.
- Wallace Arnold, S.C.
- 2110 W Park Court, Suite C,
Champaign, IL 61821
- 217-352-3536 ext 3 www.ccswcd.com
- www.facebook.com/champaigncswcd

FISH SALE - SPRING 2021

The Fall 2020 Fish Sale went well with Andry's Fish Farm as the new supplier. Customers and CCSWCD were pleased, so plans are underway to hold a Spring 2021 Fish Sale. Information and the order form will be posted on our website and mailed to customers once dates are finalized.

ANNUAL MEETING AND DIRECTOR ELECTION 2021

Due to the unforeseen future of COVID-19, the District Board of Directors decided it was best to cancel the 78th Annual Meeting for the Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District. Please like us on social media and be on the lookout for various videos in February that will highlight accomplishments from the past year.

Without an Annual Meeting, the CCSWCD will hold a drive through General Election, giving you the opportunity to elect your district board members!

On February 5th, the general election will be held at the Champaign County Soil and Water District office, located at 2110 W Park Court, Suite C, Champaign IL 61821. Two directors will be elected to serve the CCSWCD. The polls will be open from 7am-5pm. All persons, firms, or corporations who hold a legal title or are in legal possession of any land lying within the boundaries of the Champaign county are eligible to vote.

All we ask is that once you arrive, please call the office at 217-352-3536 ext. 3 to let us know you are ready to vote. Stay in your car and we will bring a ballot to you! Staff will be taking safety precautions and wearing masks.

COVER CROP CHAMPION ENGAGES NEW AUDIENCES

Thanks to the National Wildlife Federation's Cover Crop Champion grant program, the CCSWCD hosted two successful events, sharing information with farmers and landowners about soil health and water quality.

"Supper & Soil" was held at Parkland College in March, 2020, right before the COVID-19 shutdowns. The event was geared towards farming families of all ages - the District prepared crafts for kids, including soil painting, we had a delicious BBQ dinner, and Jennifer Fridgen, Parkland Agriculture Program Director, gave a tour of the College's cover crop research plots next to the Tony Noel Center. Guests were also encouraged to conduct a slake test with samples from Parkland's cover crop plots to see the impacts of converting from conventional tillage to no-tillage. The event was focused on creating a fun, informal atmosphere for peer networking and learning about soil health and water quality.

In partnership with American Farmland Trust, CCSWCD held a virtual women learning circle July

21 & 22, titled "Conservation Conversation." Women farmers, landowners, and those representing other roles in agriculture tuned in to learn about management practices that build soil

health, and then how to hold a conversation with a farming partner or operator about implementing such practices. Robin Moore, Land Stewardship Project, was a guest speaker to provide insight and encouragement to participants to have engaging conversations with their peers about soil and water conservation, lease management, and women empowerment in the agriculture sector.

Both events were great success, and the District appreciates the partnership we gained with our Farmer Champion, Sarah Hastings, who helped us brainstorm activities and provide insight as a woman farmer in Champaign County. Thank you to our partners, speakers, and participants!



WELCOME NEW EMPLOYEES

Our office has experienced a lot of change this past year. Last July, Kevin Donoho moved to a different position within NRCS and Pete Frey joined our team as the NRCS District Conservationist. He leads both the Champaign and Vermilion offices and regularly splits his time between the two. He is experienced NRCS and working hard to help farmers with all their conservation needs. Also in July, we were fortunate to welcome Wallace Arnold as the NRCS Soil Conservationist for our county. Wallace has a background in Nature Resource Management; he's a quick learner and an asset to our team. We are excited to send out congratulations to Erin on her recent marriage taking her from Erin Bush to Erin Gundy. We are all very happy for her and her husband! And finally, we just welcomed Erin Cocca to Illinois and our office the beginning of December.

Erin Cocca is the new NRCS Survey Aide at CCSWCD. Erin is from snowy Buffalo, NY, and she went to school in Syracuse, NY at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science



and Forestry. Erin studied Conservation Biology, and she became interested in conservation of natural resources on agricultural lands throughout her education. This past growing season, Erin worked on a small vegetable farm in New Hampshire where she learned a lot about growing food and working with farmers. Because Erin wants to do conservation work on farms, she is excited to be in a new area with so much farmland and so much potential for this type of work!

Conservation Cropping Seminars 2021

- Speakers include:
 - Ray Archuleta - Mr. Soil Health!
 - Dr. Joel Gruver - Western IL University
 - Dr. Nic Jelinski - University of MN
 - IL S.T.A.R. Coordinators & Farmers
 - Dr. Stacy Zuber - NRCS Soil Health Specialist
 - The Peterson Farm Brothers 😊

Earn FREE Soil & Water CEUs!!

JOIN US ONLINE

January 20, January 28, & February 4
9 AM - 11 AM CST

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Register for FREE Today: www.ccswcd.com

Conservation Cropping Seminars

Great opportunity for farmers, like yourself, to hear from educators, researchers, and local Illinois farmers.

Topics include:

Soil Health, Cover Crops, Grazing Systems, Overall Profitability, S.T.A.R., and More

REGENERATIVE GRAZING: FUNDAMENTALS FOR FARMERS

AN ONLINE SERIES EXPLORING THE FUNDAMENTALS OF REGENERATIVE GRAZING +
AN ON-FARM FIELD DAY TO LEARN ABOUT REGENERATIVE GRAZING IN PRACTICE



February 11- The WHY: What is Regenerative Grazing?

February 18 - The HOW: The Nuts and Bolts of Regenerative Grazing

February 25 - Ask Me Anything!

April - On-farm Field Day (date and location TBA - in East-Central or Southeastern Illinois)
Tentative, dependent on COVID conditions

Online Series: \$30

In-person Field Day: \$30

Series + Field Day: \$50

All online sessions will begin at **9:00 am CST** and be presented by **Kent Solberg**, Livestock and Grazing Specialist with the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. Kent will be joined by Illinois graziers to provide context for implementing regenerative grazing in Illinois.

Have you heard the buzz about regenerative grazing, but still wonder what it all means? We can help! Are you:

- a beef producer hoping to improve your environmental and economic outcomes?
- a row crop farmer looking for a herd to graze your cover crops, or looking to add livestock into your rotation?
- a landowner exploring additional revenue streams?

Join us for an interactive online series that will provide you with a broad understanding of the ins and outs of regenerative grazing. Visit www.thelandconnection.org/event/grazing-series to learn more and to **register**.



Why regenerative grazing?

Regenerative grazing can enhance soil health and reduce nutrient loss while supporting farm profitability. This differs from continuous grazing by regularly moving livestock to create a more even distribution of manure throughout the pasture, providing fertility to the land, and allowing it time to rest and *regenerate*. This type of grazing is well-suited for Illinois because it can:

- provide an additional revenue stream to farmers and landowners;
- provide opportunities to grain farmers to integrate livestock into their rotations by grazing fallow fields and cover crops; and
- improve soil health and water quality.



Pasture Project
AT THE WALLACE CENTER

ILLINOIS
Extension

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



NRCS CAN HELP YOU WITH YOUR FARMING OPERATION

New staff have been assigned to the Champaign Field Office – Please give us a chance to assist you!

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides cost-share for projects, practices or the development of comprehensive activity plans associated with row crops, specialty crops, grazing operations, confined livestock facilities, forest lands and more! Some common practices around Champaign include Forest Management Plans and Implementation, Pollinator Habitat, High Tunnels, Nutrient Management, Cover Crops, Waterways, Terraces, Grade Stabilization, CNMPs for Confined Livestock Operations and Implementation, Ag Energy Plans and Implementation, Fence, Livestock Pipeline, Heavy Use Areas, and much more!

*Application deadline for FY2021 is January 8, 2021!

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) provides cost incentives to agricultural producers to adopt new strategies, make temporary changes to their operation, or enhance existing conservation cover that could potentially improve their footprint in retrospect to shared environment in which we live. The program is a 5-year commitment and provides annual payments each year not to exceed \$200,000 over the life of the contract.

Enhanced conservation activities include multispecies cover crops, use of precision application technology to apply nutrients, modifications to nutrient management, establish pollinator habitat for monarch butterflies, conversion to no-till or strip-till, make soil health modifications, expand or enhance existing field borders, filter strips, pollinator plantings and numerous other practices. *No application deadlines have been announced. Submitting an application does not commit you!

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) will now be a stand-alone program with updates soon to come.



Please visit www.NRCS.USDA.gov/ for more information.

Contact Champaign County NRCS for one-on-one assistance or to complete an application.

Wallace Arnold, Soil Conservationist
217-352-3536 ext. 131 - wallace.arnold@usda.gov

Pete Frey, District Conservationist
217-352-3536 ext. 114 - peter.frey@usda.gov

As a cooperator of NRCS, SWCD must provide reasonable accommodation to USDA customers with disabilities, where appropriate. Individuals requiring reasonable accommodations for any NRCS or SWCD programs or services should contact Carzella Pritchett, Illinois NRCS' Disability Emphasis Program Manager at (217) 353-6651 directly. Determinations on requests for reasonable accommodations will be made on a case-by-case basis.

BARNHART PRAIRIE

Last year you read about the new gate purchased through the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. Unfortunately, the gate was closed more than anticipated in 2020.



While the Barnhart family and CCSWCD hope people visit the prairie and walk the paths to explore the flora and fauna during the day, the most important aspect of the nature preserve is to protect the habitat. Unfortunately there was a series of disrespectful and dangerous behaviors that caused us to close the gate. The prairie will be closed for the winter while a new visitor policy is created.

We do appreciate all those who come to the prairie and respect its beauty and we will strive to create more opportunities for you to enjoy the site. Look for additional signage at the prairie, and please visit the Barnhart Prairie Nature Reserve on Facebook to stay up to date on visitor policies and hours.



SAVING TOMORROW'S AGRICULTURE RESOURCES - S.T.A.R.

The S.T.A.R. (Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources) initiative is excited about its recent growth and new opportunities in the upcoming new year. Formed in 2017 by the Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District, S.T.A.R. has expanded to 71 Illinois counties and two counties in Indiana, evaluating over 83,000 acres. The initiative has also stretched to other states, including Iowa, Missouri, and Colorado.

With support from a diverse steering committee and industry partners, the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts has hired a new full-time S.T.A.R. Coordinator, Nick Longbuco. By working with Conservation Districts and other partners, Nick plans on growing S.T.A.R., helping farmers demonstrate and improve upon their land stewardship goals. "What attracted me to S.T.A.R. was the local farmer focused approach." said Nick. "It is a grassroots effort with a unique collection of local stakeholders and a shared goal of developing a practical but scientifically sound way to measure and promote conservation progress on the farm."

S.T.A.R. uses a simple evaluation tool to assign points for various cropping activities on a field. The total points are used to assign a 1 to 5 STAR rating. The higher the rating, the more is being done to protect and improve soil and water.

"You can't improve what you don't measure," says Nick, "and S.T.A.R. can help identify where a different approach, like to tillage or conservative nutrient management, might be more effective for the environment and your bottom line."

With over half of the participating fields applying nitrogen at or below the Maximum Return to Nitrogen (MRTN), those S.T.A.R. farmers avoided losing 27,195 pounds of nitrogen from their fields! This is a short-term win-win for farmers while setting the table for long-term opportunities that are coming down the pipe.

S.T.A.R.'s user friendly, practice-based approach is gaining interest from food and grain companies. Pilot projects providing financial incentives to farmers for S.T.A.R. participation will soon be announced.

The harvest season is over, and farmers should take time to reflect on 2020 and start planning for the next cropping year. S.T.A.R. can help farmers evaluate current nutrient and soil management goals and identify areas for improvement.

Open enrollment for the 2020 Crop Year is ongoing through February 1st, 2021. Participation is free, and is as simple as completing a field form using any of the three easy methods described at www.starfreetool.com. If interested in S.T.A.R., contact your local county Soil and Water Conservation District to see if they are a licensed provider or contact Nick Longbuco.

Nick Longbuco | S.T.A.R. Coordinator
Cell: (248) 807-2235
Nick.Longbuco@AISWCD.org



SAVING TOMORROW'S
S.T.A.R.
AGRICULTURE RESOURCES

CALL US AT
217-778-0272

**WE WANT TO
TALK WITH YOU!**

**SUPPORT STAR BY TELLING US ABOUT YOUR
POSITIVE EXPERIENCES USING STAR!**

STARFREETOOL.COM @STARFREETOOL FACEBOOK.COM/STARFREETOOL

**Cover Crops
Water Well Decommissioning**

**Grassed Waterways
Conservation Cover (Pollinators)**

**Contact Hannah about potential incentive payments
through the Partners for Conservation Fund.**

IL S.T.A.R. – 2020 Field Form

For office use:

Points: _____

STARs: _____



"If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." - Peter Drucker

Farmer/Owner Information:

1. Name: _____ Email: _____
 Phone: (____) _____ - _____ Street/City/Zip: _____
 2. Field name: _____ 3. 2020 Crop: _____ 4. Acres: _____
 5. County: _____ 6. Sec/Township/Range: _____
 7. Owner: _____ 8. Is this field tile-drained? Yes No

I understand this field may be randomly selected for verification. To the best of my knowledge, this information is correct.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

IMPORTANT - Before proceeding, please review these instructions. Accurate responses will help ensure your field is awarded the correct point total and S.T.A.R. rating.

- This form documents field activities beginning immediately after harvest in 2019 and concluding with 2020 harvest.
- Read every item under each category. More than one selection is possible, but sometimes no items will be selected.
Example of multiple selections from the Cover Crops section- You planted a cover crop mix of cereal rye and tillage radish. You would select "Winter hardy- single species" and "Winter kill- single species."
- Completely read each statement. Several have more than one qualifier that needs to be met.
Example from the Spring Tillage section- "Any full width operation, limited to a single pass, where no fall tillage was performed."

First, tell us a little bit about the field you have selected.

9. Conservation and Management Practices- (check all that apply on this individual field):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saturated Buffers | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Plan that reduces sheet/rill erosion to "T" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bioreactor | <input type="checkbox"/> Nitrogen rate study conducted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Constructed Wetland | <input type="checkbox"/> You attended a soil health or nutrient management meeting or field day within the last year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Terraces/Contours/WASCOBs | <input type="checkbox"/> Nutrient management plan and/or field is under CCA advisement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grass Filter Strip/Riparian Buffer | <input type="checkbox"/> Enrolled in Federal/State/Local Conservation Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grass Waterway | <input type="checkbox"/> Completed S.T.A.R. Form in 2019 for this field |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pollinator Planting (a ½ acre minimum) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Windbreak | |

Now let's establish a crop history for this field.

10. Crop Rotation- use an "X" to indicate the 5-year crop history on this field.

Crop	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Corn					
Soybean					
Small Grain: _____					
Forage: _____					
Pasture: _____					
Other: _____					

Example: A field has been in corn/soybean rotation for over a decade. In 2020 it was planted to corn. Place an "X" adjacent to corn for the years 2020, 2018, 2016. Soybean would have an "X" for 2019, 2017. If your crop is not listed, i.e. Milo, write your crop on the line and mark "X" in the year(s) planted.

11. Cover Crops (Summer 2019-Spring 2020)- Established with NRCS guidelines (must have some growth):

- Winter hardy- single species
- Winter hardy- 2 or more species
- Winter kill- single species
- Winter kill- 2 or more species
- Cover crop was terminated AFTER spring 2020 cash crop planting

Discussion: Time period varies slightly here. Any cover crops established in 2019 either prior to harvest or after a summer crop was harvested count. Examples: aerial application into standing corn or drilling after wheat harvest.

Continue to Page 2

12. Soil Sampling- Use the previous 5-year field history:

- Not sampled
- Sampled every 4 years or less
- Spring or Summer sampled
- Fall sampled
- GPS sampled (by grid or zone)

Discussion: Here is a great example of why you should read every item in each category. If a respondent simply marked "Sampled every 4 years or less" they may have missed points if they didn't indicate when the field was sampled or if GPS was used.

Almost done. The next category is tillage practices broken down into Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 categories.

13. Fall Tillage- Starting after harvest of the 2019 crop:

- No tillage or low disturbance fertilizer toolbar
- Strip tillage on field classified as non-HEL
- Shank type fertilizer bar and no other tillage performed
- Any full width operation not exceeding a 3" depth
- Any full width operation exceeding a 3" depth
- Any full width operation on soybean stubble

Discussion: With numerous possibilities for soil preparation, we elected to keep the options fairly simple. No tillage and strip tillage are easily definable. Full-width tillage can be tricky. In the fall, focus on the depth of machine operation and also note if soybean residue was tilled. In the spring, how many passes were made and was fall tillage performed?

14. Spring Tillage- 2020 field operations:

- No tillage or low disturbance fertilizer toolbar
- Strip tillage or Strip freshener on non-HEL field, or shank type fertilizer bar, and no other Spring tillage
- Any full width operation, limited to a single pass, where no fall tillage was performed
- Any full width operation, two or more passes, where no fall tillage was performed
- Any full width operation, one or more passes, where fall tillage was performed

Finally, your nutrient management strategies are a large component of your overall score. Like tillage, we've broken these into two sections defined by specific time periods. A third section reviews activities that may have occurred at any time during the crop year being reviewed.

15. Nutrient Management (Fall 2019 – February 2020):

- No Nitrogen was applied in this time frame other than MAP or DAP
- Wheat topdress
- MAP or DAP was applied before December 1st
- NH₃ was applied when the soil temperature was below 50 degrees, and amounted to no more than 50% of the total Nitrogen program, and included an inhibitor
- Manure/Biosolid injected or applied and incorporated when soil temperature was below 50 degrees.
- Manure applied, not incorporated

16. Nutrient Management (March 1st – Summer 2020):

- No Nitrogen was applied in this time frame AND no prior Fall 2019-February 2020 Nitrogen other than MAP or DAP
- Spring/Summer nitrogen application(s) amounted to 50% - 74% of the total N Program (from all sources)
- Spring/Summer nitrogen application(s) amounted to at least 75% of the total N Program (from all sources)
- In-season N application (top or sidedress) was at least 25% of the total N Program (from all sources)
- Manure/Biosolid injected or applied and incorporated
- Manure applied, not incorporated

17. Additional Nutrient Activities:

- Total Nitrogen applied on corn that followed a different crop was 181 to 200 lbs./acre,
OR corn-on-corn was 201 to 220 lbs./acre
- Total Nitrogen applied on corn that followed a different crop was 180 lbs. or LESS/acre,
OR corn-on-corn was 200 lbs. or LESS/acre
- Phosphorus and/or Potassium application based on removal rates and/or soil samples (may mean zero applied)
- At least 50% of total applied phosphorus was banded subsurface
- Used Triple Super Phosphate (0-45-0)
- Used Variable Rate Technology application
- Any fertilizer source containing Nitrogen or Phosphorous was broadcast on **frozen** or **snow-covered** ground

COVID-19 Office Update:

With COVID19 restrictions, our office is not currently open to the public. However, we are still working both in the office and remotely.

Please reach us at the following:

Hannah McDonald: 217-352-3536 x 3 or Hannah.McDonald@il.nacdnet.net
Erin Gundy: 815-317-6410 or Erin.Bush@il.nacdnet.net

PRECISION CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Through our 300+ farmer members and their operations' data, we can determine which practices are best suited for maximizing your return on investment in conservation. As of the fall of 2020, we have found that farmers in Champaign County who apply most of their Nitrogen in the fall, yield \$50 less per acre than any other Nitrogen application strategy in 2019. On our highly productive soils in Champaign County, overwintering cover crops ahead of soybeans were not as productive or profitable. However, on lower productivity soils in the East-Central Region, we can see that over wintering cover crops maintained yields and profits. As far as tillage is concerned, our data shows that strip tillage is the most profitable practice for corn in the East-Central Region as well.



To help share some of the cost of cover crop practices, we offer an ADM and Pepsi cover crop cost share program that provides \$10/acre for up to 150 acres of NEW cover crop ground. We also are in partnership with STAR, Soil Health Partnership and the Ecosystem Services Marketing Consortium (ESMC) which is a new type of carbon credit program that allows you to stack Carbon, Water Quality, and soil health credits to maximize your return on adopting stewardship-minded practices.

Precision Conservation Management (PCM) has been renewed for another 5 year RCPP Contract at \$5.3 million for our farmer partners to take advantage of PCM. In Champaign County, Clay Bess has been at the fore front of this effort and is now focusing his efforts on Frito Lay and Bunge growers, some of whom are located here in Champaign County. As of the new year, 2021, Luke Rund will be taking over most Farmers in the PCM program in Champaign County. Luke has grown up on his family farm in Champaign County and knows the areas and practices well and is willing to work with you to continue to find avenues to make conservation benefit your farm.

Farmer's Annual Time Commitment:

Data Collection (1hr)

Check-In Calls/ Re-Enrollment(30-60min)

RAAP Delivery (60-90min)

How do you join PCM?

Contact your local PCM Specialist or SWCD office to enroll or learn more about the program!

Luke Rund PCM Specialist

Phone: (309)336-0765

Email: lrund@precisionconservation.org

Serving Champaign, Piatt, Douglas
and DeWitt County



Precision Conservation Management

ST. JOSEPH WETLAND UPDATE

Many years ago, the base for the parking and viewing area at the St. Joseph Wetland Restoration and Education site was created. Lack of funding has stopped the CCSWCD from completing the education component of this project, but 2021 will finally bring construction, thanks to a partnership with Magnolia Land Partners!

Magnolia Land Partners, LLC leverages mitigation funds to support the conservation of ecologically sensitive areas and set their sites on the St. Joseph Wetland Restoration site as the pilot location for the USDA-NRCS new wetland mitigation banking project. This means agriculture producers, in our area, have another option to remain in compliance with USDA Farm Bill wetland regulations. Magnolia

is responsible for wetland enhancements to the site including the removal of invasive species, and they will help support the education center.

In the coming year, the brick and engraved pavers will be installed on site, and a pathway around the perimeter will be created. The covered seating benches, made by students at St. Joseph Ogden High School, will be installed, along with the viewing binoculars purchased through a grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation.

Please be watching for a community event on site next summer. Your patience, volunteer efforts, and financial support are all greatly appreciated to see us to the finish.

PRESCRIBED BURNS

The Lincoln Heritage Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) can help landowners by conducting prescribed burns on grasslands and woodlands to help control undesirable and invasive plant species and encourage healthy habitat development. It does take time to write a burn plan and get applicable permits, so plan ahead and contact us today. Reach out to Hannah in the CCSWCD office.

BRING A PIECE OF THE PRAIRIE BACK TO YOUR FIELD

As harvest season turns into hunting season and farmers are preparing for next year, a new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practice has rolled out to help reduce erosion, improve water quality, and create habitat for beneficial insects and wildlife. The CP43 Prairie Strips practice includes a wide range of practical uses. A recent Iowa State University study states farms with prairie strips reduce soil loss by 95%, nitrates by 72%, and

phosphorus by 77%. A farm in southern Ford County installed prairie strips every 120 feet across the field, and this last spring, successfully captured runoff soil from the conventionally-tilled neighbor and decreased gully erosion.

But prairie strips can improve more than just the soil.

Multiple universities are running studies showing that converting just 10% of fields into native habitat, such as prairie strips, can lead to a 5-30% yield increase in soybeans. This is due to an increase in native pollinating and other beneficial insects.

University research also shows field habitat buffers, especially with a few trees, reduced the

abundance of pest insects by over 33%.

To get an idea of a prairie strip layout in your field, think of flat terraces full of flowers. Prairie strips are simple and easy to install on a farm and provide positive returns. If you have any questions about this new CRP practice, or wish to install some on your operation, feel free to give us a shout!

Dallas Glazik
Farm Bill Biologist
Pheasants Forever, Inc.
and Quail Forever
1380 E Ottawa, Paxton, IL, 60957
c. (217) 841-2978
p. (217) 379-2372
dglazik@pheasantsforever.org



SAVING TOMORROW'S AGRICULTURE RESOURCES

STARFREETOOL.COM



Let S.T.A.R. Help Create Your Lasting Legacy

The farm community is proud of its legacy, and rightfully so. We use the latest technology, combined with our tradition of a strong work ethic, to provide food, fiber, and fuel.

The S.T.A.R. initiative shares in that passion. Our simple tool can help you shape your legacy as leaving the land you've cared for in even better shape for generations to come.

When you use S.T.A.R., you're sending an important message: I care about our future. S.T.A.R. shows you are a steward of the land – for your family, friends and neighbors, and even for your future landlord.

Join us in the S.T.A.R. initiative: We're all in for protecting and promoting our investment!



Champaign County Soil & Water Conservation District is your local contact. Get S.T.A.R. ted today: visit starfreetool.com to learn more and complete your free S.T.A.R. field forms! Contact Champaign County SWCD at: 217-352-3536, ext 3.



Champaign County SWCD
 2110 W Park Court, Ste C
 Champaign, IL 61821

Presorted
 Standard
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 Permit No 70

CHECK IT OUT!

Spring Fish Sale
 Coming Soon

Funding Opportunities
 Forest Land
 NRCS EQIP & CSP

Conservation Cropping
 Seminars
 Jan 20, Jan 28 & Feb 4

S.T.A.R.

Precision Conservation
 Management

And More!

Don't wait until the cows come home!
 Register today to learn how grazing livestock
 regeneratively can support your soil and your bottom line.



**REGENERATIVE GRAZING:
 FUNDAMENTALS FOR FARMERS**

An online series exploring the fundamentals of regenerative grazing +
 an on-farm field day to learn about regenerative grazing in practice

Online Series: February 11, 18, and 25, 2021 | 9am CST | \$30
 On-Farm Field day: Date & Location TBA | \$30
 Online Series + Field Day \$50

Learn more and register at www.thelandconnection.org/event/grazing-series



CCSWCD WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Your viewpoint is important. With the challenges of the past year, we feel disconnected and need your help planning our priorities and projects for the upcoming year. Please check our website to complete a short questionnaire . www.ccswcd.com