

JASPER COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2016-2020
Strategic Plan



ADOPTION STATEMENT

This plan was adopted by the Jasper County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors on February, 2016.

Jim Martin, Chairman

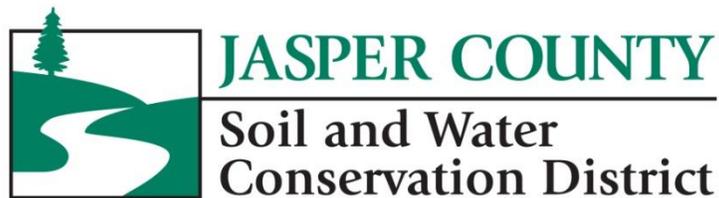
Dave Rodibaugh, Vice Chair

Mark Kingma, Supervisor

Lana Zimmer, Supervisor

Kyler Laird, Supervisor

The staff of the Jasper County Soil and Water Conservation District are equally committed to carrying out the priorities established within this document to further the SWCD mission and its commitment to foster natural resource conservation and environmental stewardship.



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Organization

The Jasper County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a legal subdivision of state government; the only local unit of government responsible for coordinating the conservation of our soil, water, and related natural resources.

The Jasper County District was organized in 1945 in accordance with the Indiana Soil Conservation Act, now amended (IC 14-32-5).

The official governing body of a Conservation District consists of five supervisors. Three are elected at the local Annual Meeting of land occupiers and two are appointed by the State Soil Conservation Board based upon recommendations of the leadership in the District. Selection of all five supervisors is based on input from the local people they serve, and as public officials responsible to the district and state, supervisors are required to subscribe to a standard public oath of office.

Purpose

The purpose of a Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide information about soil, water and related natural resource conservation; identify and prioritize local soil and water resource concerns; and connect land users to sources of education, technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices and technologies, and to connect land users to educational, technical, and financial assistance from local organizations and state and federal agencies.

Because each Conservation District develops its own programs to suit the needs of the people in its county, local citizens play an important role, and each district serves as a means for all interested people in a county to work together for natural resource conservation and development.

Mission

It is the mission of the Jasper County Soil and Water Conservation District to provide leadership and assistance in the proper use and management of soil, water, and related resources in Jasper County.

The Plan.....

Recently, the SWCD sent out a survey to a diverse group of community members requesting assistance in the identification of local natural resource concerns in three areas: 1) soil; 2) water; and 3) land use and development. Based on the concerns identified, we are hopeful that our accomplishments through this Strategic Plan will fulfill their vision and those who have spent their lives here in the cities, in the rural areas, and along the banks of the Iroquois. We will persistently move forward with comprehensive conservation programs and innovative approaches to put “conservation on the ground”. It will translate into action by combining science and gentle persuasion to advance the conservation ethic, and by joining efforts with those of other conservation organization and partners. Overall, this Plan encourages a thoughtful course of action that gives equal weight to the immediate and the long-term, as well as to the local and far-reaching impacts of our action on the natural environment.

Our continued vision of natural resources for Jasper County are:

- Healthy Soils
- Water Management
- Land Use & Development

Throughout the plan, you will note that there are goals, strategies, and a public education and outreach component for each of these natural resources. Education has been a part of the Jasper County Soil and Water Conservation District’s general objective for decades, and we continue to believe that education is one of the most effective ways to guarantee the wise use of our natural resources for the future. Building public awareness will move us forward into the next decade while ensuring Healthy soils, clean streams, sustainable communities, and an overall pleasing quality of life for the people of Jasper County.

Our Vision:

Healthy Soils

Today, as in the past, many agricultural practices and community projects accelerate soil erosion and carry pollutants into our streams and rivers. Erosion can mean the loss of important, fertile soils, and application of excessive nutrients and pesticides can turn those once productive, beneficial soils into a community problem. When the disturbed soil gets into our streams, it becomes a pollutant that deteriorates and smothers aquatic life, promotes flooding, and reduces recreational opportunities.

Below is a list of soil resource concerns that were recently identified and will be addressed over the next five years through goals and strategies that follow.

- Soil Erosion
- Soil Quality Degradation

Added together they have the cumulative effect of making nutrients and sedimentation two of our greatest water pollutants by volume.

Consequently, the need for proper care and stabilization of our soils remains a high priority and an essential component of the District's priorities over the next five years.

Healthy Soils

RESOURCE CONCERN – SOIL EROSION:

Goal 1: Establish 1,000 acres of new cover crops acres annually thru 2018.

Strategy 1: Create a regional cover crop demonstration plot.

Strategy 2: Establish long term yield plot cover crop vs. non cover crop.

Strategy 3: Conduct a minimum of 2 farmer meetings annually.

Strategy 4: Tour of soil pits spring and fall annually.

Strategy 5: Serve as an outlet of cover crop information for farmers.

Strategy 6: Conduct site visits with farmers/landowners for cover crop recommendation and evaluation.

Strategy 7: Establish landowner outreach campaign for cover crops.

Strategy 8: Address needs of specialty crop growers for cover cropping

Goal 2: 15% of county ag acres in cover crop by 2020

Strategy 1: Publish annual cover crop use report.

Strategy 2: Perform fall Cover Crop Transect with Tillage Transect.

Strategy 3: Fund innovative cc seeding techniques

Goal 3: Fall and spring transect data show an increase in no till bean acreage.

Strategy 1: Host 3 meetings annually for the tillage roundtable.

Strategy 2: Establish a mentor program for new no tillers.

Strategy 3: Perform Spring and Fall Tillage Transect ~~tillage transect every 2 years.~~

Strategy 4: Conduct site visits with landowners promoting conservation systems, resulting in 1 farmer annually reducing fall or spring tillage

Goal 4: Fall and spring transect data show an increase in no till corn acreage.

Strategy 1: Host 3 meetings annually for the tillage roundtable.

Strategy 2: Establish a mentor program for new no tillers.

Strategy 3: Perform Spring and Fall Tillage Transect.

Strategy 4: Conduct site visits with landowners promoting conservation systems resulting in 1 farmer annually reducing fall or spring tillage.

Strategy 5: Focus education and efforts on corn after corn no till production.

Goal 4: The SWCD will address excessive bank erosion through awareness and education via 10 partnering opportunities by 2018.

Strategy 1: Address active erosion sites as identified in the UIWI plan.

Strategy 2: Partner with the County Surveyor's office and neighboring counties to identify 2-stage ditch sites.

RESOURCE CONCERN – SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION:

Goal 1: Enroll 18 farmers to participate in the In-Field Advantage by 2018.

Strategy 1: Host annual winter meeting reviewing year results.

Strategy 2: Publish annual report with year results.

Strategy 3: Secure funding for ongoing testing.

Strategy 4: Partner with Purdue Extension on nitrogen rate trials.

Goal 2: Establish 1,000 acres of cover crops.

See soil erosion goals.

Goal 3: Perform soil health demonstrations across the watershed.

Strategy 1: Attending 5 regional meetings

Strategy 2: Create regional ag business list and request to speak at meetings

Goal 4: Promote the use of soil health testing and monitoring

Strategy 1: Develop cost share for soil health tests

Strategy 2: Develop long term soil health plots

Goal 5: Promote use and understand of soil health and quality to small land holders and specialty crop growers.

Strategy 1: Identify and develop list of small farmers/ speciality growers in county

Strategy 2: Develop 1 outreach program per year

Our Vision:

Water Management

Water is essential for life on Earth and plays a vital role in the proper functioning of its ecosystems. The pollution of water has a serious impact on all living creatures, and can negatively affect the use of water for drinking, household needs, recreation, fishing, transportation and commerce.

The water resource concerns identified locally that will be addressed over the next five years are:

- Water Quality Degradation
- Excess/Insufficient Water

Did you know that there is a direct correlation between buffer strips and high-quality streams? It has been documented that, as forested buffer strips are reduced, water quality declines. Protecting, maintaining, and even creating new forested corridors along streams is essential to protecting the vitality of our water resources, now and in the future.

Were you also aware that water pollution can be simply sediment finding its way into streams? Or it can be nitrogen and phosphorus resulting from malfunctioning septic systems, sewage treatment plants, animal manure, and lawn fertilizers which accelerate the growth of algae clogging our streams and harming aquatic life.

Human activity, as well as the forces of nature, inevitably impact the quality of the water resources that we depend on. Education and appreciation for this fundamental resource is the first step toward changing the behavior of society to realize that we all live in a watershed and we all live downstream!

Water Management

RESOURCE CONCERN – WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION:

Goal 1: The SWCD will increase septic system awareness/education through 5 partnering opportunities by 2018.

Strategy 1: Improve working relationships with County sanitation department.

Strategy 2: Partner with neighboring counties and/or Arrow Head Country RC&D to conduct one educational workshop for public officials and one for private citizens.

Strategy 3: Educate home owners/builders about proper sites for installing septic systems and alternative systems.

Strategy 4: Use watershed plan funding sources.

Strategy 5: Finish and utilize Homeowners Guide.

Goal 2: The SWCD will increase buffered streambanks from 20% to 50% as stated in the UIWI plan.

Strategy 1: Secure funding to cost share on buffered areas.

Strategy 2: Targeted outreach/mailings to mapped watershed areas.

Goal 3: Reduce excess nutrients in ground water.

Strategy 1: Continue to offer well testing and education

Strategy 2: Continue to monitor streams and conduct yearly water testing

Strategy 3: Education home owners/builders on proper use of fertilizers

Goal 4: Reduce excess nutrients in surface water.

Strategy 1: Establish buffers with priority given to areas with greatest potential for nutrient loading.

Strategy 2: Install 1 demonstration bio reactor.

Strategy 3: Install 4 saturated buffers

Strategy 4: Publish reports on saturated buffer sites.

RESOURCE CONCERN – EXCESS/INSUFFICIENT WATER:

Goal 1: The SWCD will work to reduce stormwater runoff by facilitating programs to establish 50 BMPS.

Strategy 1: Promote and sell 20 rain barrels to encourage water conservation

Strategy 2: Promote and sell native trees, plants to encourage water absorption in the natural landscape.

Strategy 3: Improve working relationships with County and city drainage boards, plan commissions, engineer, etc.

Strategy 4: Plant a rain garden as a demo site and conduct tours for government officials and local citizens to educate them on soil and water conservation programs.

Goal 2: Increase flood storage capacity by xxxx%.

Strategy 1: Encourage the installation of water control structures to treat 2000 acres.

Strategy 2: Install 4 saturated buffers in key critical areas.

Strategy 3: Install 1 mile of 2-stage ditch within targeted watershed area.

Strategy 4: Promote WRP.

Strategy 5: Open up backwater areas to annual flooding in identified targeted areas.

Our Vision:

Land Use & Development

As more people discover the pleasing quality of life in Jasper County, they will put more pressure on our land, water, and ecosystems, as well as our infrastructure systems, and recreation facilities.

As more and more of our natural resources are consumed, the specific characteristics of a given piece of land become the essential clues which reveal its best use. The physical properties of a parcel as well as human needs and nearby uses all should factor into land use decisions. Planners, farmers, engineers and builders should all rely on the soil survey to identify the characteristics of soil in a given location and whether it would be suitable for uses such as farming or road construction.

Below are two land use and development resource concerns identified that will be addressed over the next five years:

- Habitat Degradation
- Inadequate livestock water

The District's role is to consider all resources, i.e., soil, water, air, plants, animals, and humans and to promote good resource management. This, plus providing detailed information about Jasper County's streams, wetlands, soils, and topography continue to be of the utmost importance to encourage wise management and development of our sustainable communities, both natural and manmade.

Land Use & Development

RESOURCE CONCERN – HABITAT DEGRADATION/FRAGMENTATION:

Goal 1: Educate 200 landowners about benefits of native plants and the negative impact of invasive plants on the environment by 2018.

Strategy 1: Partner with wildlife groups to host a workshop about the benefits of native plants and invasive plant control.

Strategy 2: Partner with wildlife groups to host an Invasive Plant Removal Day targeting specific lands.

Strategy 3:

Goal 2: 100 acres of wildlife habitat will be installed in Jasper County by 2020.

Strategy 1: Promote Best Management Practices

Strategy 2: CRP, EQIP new contracts

Goal 3: 100 acres of wildlife habitat will be protected in Jasper County by 2020.

Strategy 1: Work with wildlife groups to identify key parcels of land.

Strategy 2: CRP, EQIP re enrolls – contribution agreements

RESOURCE CONCERN – INADEQUATE LIVESTOCK WATER:

Goal 1: Reduce number of livestock access sites by 50% in key critical areas.

Strategy 1: Secure funding

Strategy 2: Identify willing landowners

Strategy 3: Get 5 systems installed by 2020.

Our Vision:

District Development

In order for the Jasper SWCD to carry out its strategic plan district development must be ongoing.

Below are needs identified that will be addressed over the next five years:

- Capacity to respond/deliver
- Greater Community Involvement
- Office Policies

District Development

Capacity to Respond/Deliver

Goal 1: Develop Education Center

Strategy 1: Utilization of building year round

Strategy 2: Educational program during Fair Week

Goal 2: Maintain adequate and skilled staffing

Strategy 1: Develop individual staff goals

Strategy 2: Update job descriptions

Strategy 3: Annual job reviews conduct

Goal 3: Media presence

Strategy 1: Weekly facebook conservation posts

Strategy 2: Relevant and timely YouTube videos

Strategy 3: Monthly newspaper articles

Strategy 4: Annual Report

Goal 4: Office Duties

Strategy 1: Conduct annual meeting

Strategy 2: Develop office policy manual

Strategy 3: Maintain books, payroll, grant treasure

Strategy 4: Department head to Courthouse

Strategy 5: Grant writing/funding sources

Goal 5: Maintain and increase funding

Strategy 1: Meet annually with County Council and Commissioners to ensure operational funding

Strategy 2: Secure outside grants for program funding