

Jasper County Soil and Water Conservation District
211 E. Drexel Parkway
Rensselaer, IN 47978
(219) 866-8008 x3
jaspercountysoilandwater@gmail.com

April 28, 2026 – 3:00 PM CDT

Jasper County SWCD Education Center – Fairgrounds

Supervisors Present – Lana Zimmer, Jim Martin, Stuart Orr, Scott Bahler, Mark Kingma

Staff Present – Cayci Lane and Shay Seibring

Partners Present – Courtney McFall, Kevin Shide

Public - Cheryl Fugate

1. **Call to Order** - The meeting was called to order at 3:06pm by Board Chair Lana Zimmer.
2. **Partner Agencies and Public Comment**
 - a. **NRCS** – Kevin Shide distributed a document to the board listing the applications that will be accepted into contracts.
 - b. **ISDA** – Courtney McFall discussed the transect results from April 15, noting that cover crops levels were very low – possibly due to having less time to get them established. Mark Kingma added comments on the trade-off between time and input costs for cover crops.
 - c. **RC&D – Jim Martin** – Jim Martin reported that the RC&D did not meet in April and therefore he had no new update. He asked the board to consider whether the JCSWCD would like to continue participating with Arrowhead RC&D in the future. There are brief discussion about participation in River rafting, either with RC&D or with the Kankakee River Days. Participation will be determined in the near future.
 - d. **Weed Control Board (WCB) - Jim Martin** – Jim Martin introduced Shay Seibring as the new Weed Control Program Coordinator for the Jasper County Weed Control Board. Shay participated in the Home and Garden Expo on April 10-11 and previously worked at the Kankakee Sands, bringing a background in invasive species management. Jim reported that the county vehicle assigned to Shay still requires signage and maintenance before it will be available for use. Shay will work four days per week for the WCB and one day per week for the JCSWCD.
 - e. **Jasper County Invasives Initiative (JCII)** – Stuart Orr reported that JCII has not met recently, as Summer Brinkman is on maternity leave. He noted that JCII will need to schedule a meeting, and that Shay Seibring will assist with an upcoming Weed Wrangle. After some discussion, a Prairie Border Walk was scheduled for Wednesday, May 27th, with Friday May 29th for a rain date.
 - f. **Kankakee River Basin & Yellow River Basin Development - Mark Kingma** – Mark Kingma informed the board that the remaining work in Jasper County on the Kankakee Riverbank has been completed. He reported that the last of the riprap has been placed, and hydroseeding can proceed once that work is finished. The state line bridge, a source of log and ice jams, will be removed soon.
 - g. **Public Comment** – Cheryl Fugate informed the board that she met with Summer Brinkman shortly before her leave to discuss Cheryl managing the community garden at the Purdue Extension office. Cheryl reported that there are 24 (20x20) plots rented out this year.
3. **Minutes from Previous Meeting**
 - a. **March Minutes** - The board reviewed the March meeting minutes. Stuart Orr made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, and Mark Kingma seconded the motion. The motion carried.
4. **Treasurer's Report**
 - a. **Monthly and YTD Financial Reports** – Courtney McFall requested approval to use *What the Buzz Part 2* funds for a pollinator planting. Mark Kingma made the motion to approve the request, Scott Bahler

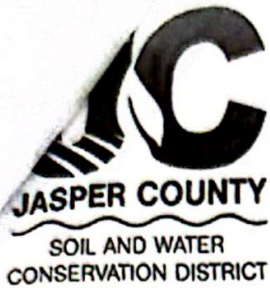


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seconded. The motion carried. Cayci Lane presented the March financial reports, which the board reviewed. Stuart Orr made the motion to approve; Jim Martin seconded the motion. The motion carried.

5. Old Business - Current Grant/Deliverables Updates

- a. **LKWI current update** – Cayci Lane informed the board that she submitted the LKWI Quarter 9 report on April 20. The total funds the LKWI will be receiving amount to \$12,928.80, with \$3,895.60 of that allocated directly to JCSWCD.
 - i. **LKWI Implementation Phase 2** – Lana Zimmer informed the board that, following discussions with Newton County SWCD, both districts agreed that Newton County will serve as the lead agency for LKWI Phase 2, with JCSWCD participating as the partner.
- b. **Summer Agrivoltaics Tour - R-STEP** – Lana Zimmer informed the board that she and Jim Martin toured an event on agrivoltaics in Starke County. This event was attended by approximately 50 participants, including three Pulaski County staff and supervisors and one Starke County supervisor. Lana also reported that the Summer Summit will not be held this year and noted that JCSWCD will be planning a joint SWCD/supervisor event in its place. A late summer agrivoltaics tour will be planned.
- c. **Education Center Renovations update - action plan needed**
 - i. **Mural legend install** – Cayci Lane informed the board that the mural legend for the Education Center has been received and is currently awaiting painting before it can be installed.
 - ii. **Education Center Displays** – The board discussed potential educational displays for the Education Center, including exhibits on invasive species, cover crops, and watershed concepts. Ideas also included a time-lapse video of root growth to be shown on the tv, as well as an acrylic panel or tube incorporated into the cover crop/native plant boxes to allow visitors to view root development.
 - iii. **Tree Sale update** – Cayci Lane updated the board on the tree sale, noting that half of the trees will be ready for pickup on April 30 and May 1. Cayci also noted that Hensler was unable to fill the entire order, requiring additional trees to be sourced from other nurseries, which are expected to arrive the following week.
- d. **Garden Show April 10-11 debrief** – Shay Seibring provided the board with a recap of the Home and Garden Expo. Shay reported that the WCB table featured a Callery Pear video along with information on replacement options and other invasive species, including honeysuckle, poison hemlock, phragmites, and Callery Pear. Shay noted that attendance exceeded 100 people each day. She also shared that the Friends of the Kankakee Sands donated native plants and seeds for distribution to participants. The Newton County SWCD also generously donated native trees for distribution. The District also had a table at the event. Board members from the SWCD and WCB assisted staff in manning the booths.
- e. **2026 Initiatives - action needed**
 - i. **Cover crop cost share** – The board discussed several potential cover crop cost-share programs they would like to implement in 2026, including options connected to UIWI (Upper Iroquois Watershed Initiative) project and both conventional and aerial application methods. The board



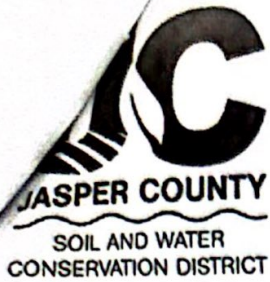
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noted that a clear timeline and defined parameters will need to be established. Lana requested that archived files from the UIWI and other previous related grants be reviewed for specific details and cost-share documents that we might use going forward. Following the discussion, Mark Kingma made a motion to document how the 2026 season progresses and then develop a plan for 2027 that includes program promotion, securing sponsorships to support cost-share, and identifying the story to tell and video content. Scott Bahler seconded the motion. Motion carried.

- ii. **Adopt –a- Ramp Volunteer Day (United Way)** – The board discussed coordinating a volunteer day at Laird’s Landing in Rensselaer. They considered involving the WCB to assist with the event, provide a demonstration, and structure it as a weekend effort focused on site cleanup and education about invasive species. Jim Martin made the motion to approve of this event; Mark Kingma seconded. Motion carried.
- iii. **Residential water quality projects** – The board discussed the potential purchase of water well testing kits and considered offering them as a cost-share program, with promotion planned during fair week. Following discussion, the board agreed to allocate \$2,500 from the CWI funds to support the cost-share effort. Lana reported that Heidelberg College Water Quality Lab has been used in the past and holds past data from Jasper County, and that kits are available from there. Mark Kingma made the motion to approve the allocation of funds; Scott Bahler seconded. Motion carried.

6. New Business -Board Action Items

- a. **New Associate supervisor, Cheryl Fugate** – Cheryl Fugate introduced herself to the board. Cheryl shared that she enjoys learning about agriculture and the SWCD, brings 40 years of experience from the corporate sector, and has a strong background in marketing. Cheryl is also a Purdue Master Gardener and is passionate about community involvement. Scott Bahler moved to officially appoint Cheryl Fugate as a new Associate Supervisor; Jim Martin seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- b. **NiSource grant award** – JCSWCD was awarded \$5,000 for the Woodland Invasives Plant Suppression Program. In this program, JCSWCD will aim to work directly with Jasper County landowners who own, manage, or maintain properties with woodlands, forests, riparian areas, or shoreline habitats. The program focuses on restoring native plants to these natural spaces, improving overall habitat quality for wildlife and, in some cases, fish. Stewardship efforts will include the management, control, and eradication of invasive plants species. Shay Seibring and Courtney McFall will take the lead on implementing this program.
- c. **Kesling resignation - Next steps** – The board discussed next steps following Joshua Kesling’s resignation. Topics included updating the job description. It was determined that a greatly increased level of agricultural knowledge and/or experience is needed. The current title of Watershed Specialist will be revised to Natural Resource Specialist, and that a strong agriculture and natural resources background for the new hire will be required. The board will hold an executive session on April 27 to continue this



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discussion and consider potential adjustments to the position. Jim Martin made the motion to proceed with a new hire; Stuart Orr seconded. Motion carried.

- d. **Local Working Group** – Kevin Shide initiated a discussion on determining local resource concerns. The SWCD is responsible for identifying its top ten resource concerns, which NRCS then uses as part of its ranking and point system for program applications. Kevin requested that the finalized list be submitted by October 1. The board will set a date in June to review and determine the SWCD's top concerns.
- e. **Education Center** - The board discussed ongoing updates to the Education Center in preparation for fair week. Also, the budget for all projects was determined, as well as the individuals who will see the projects through to completion.
 - i. **Outdoor clean-up** – The board discussed the need to clean up the flower beds and the native plant/cover crop boxes and begin preparing them for the upcoming season.
 - ii. **Outdoor education area for development - action plan needed** – The board discussed the need for additional facility improvements at the Education Center. Items included installing fencing between the Education Center and the bathrooms, completing gutter installation – currently quoted at approximately \$3,000 – and proceeding with rain barrel installation once the gutters are in place.
 - iii. **Mural bid** – Lana Zimmer presented to the board a bid for painting a mural on the bathroom wall next to the Education Center. The bid, submitted by Addy Cain, was for \$2,500.
 - iv. **Wall and floor painting bid** – Lana Zimmer presented to the board a bid for painting the walls and the floors inside the Education Center. The bid, submitted by Family Pro Painting & Decorating, was for \$3,455. After some discussion, it was decided to paint both the walls and the concrete floor.
 - v. **Tasks** - The following individuals have committed to completing or making arrangements to complete the following Education Center updates:
 1. Scott - Gutters, rain barrel, backfill for native planting
 2. Mark - a display showing plant roots
 3. Jim - privacy fence and indoor trim
 4. Courtney and Cayci - Cover crop boxes
 5. Stuart, Courtney, Cheryl, and Shay - Outdoor cleanup and native plantings
 6. Lana and Cayci - Outdoor signage and indoor displays
 7. Lana - mural and painting inside
 8. Lana - working with Kevin Moore to get internet in building,
 - vi. **Budget** - A motion was made to fund Education Center updates from CWI funds (2024 - \$4,652.59 and 2026 - \$10,000) by Stuart Orr and seconded by Mark Kingma for a grand total of \$14,652.59. The motion carried.



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With no further business, Mark Kingma made a motion to adjourn the meeting on April 28, 2026 at 5:32pm, and Stuart Orr seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Laura Zimmer

Scott Behler

Mark Kingma

Jim Mather
Stuart Orr

Respectfully submitted by:

Cayci Lane, District Coordinator/Treasurer