

# STARK COUNTY

## Soil & Water Conservation District

7419B State Route 17 - Toulon, IL 61483  
(309) 286-2261 Ext. #3



### Conservation News

## OUR MISSION since 1943:

Our District was organized to provide a cooperative organization through which all people and agencies may work in a united manner toward the improvement and consideration of our soil, moisture, woodland and wildlife. By so doing, we shall maintain or increase the standard of living of the people within our District and be able to leave fertile soils for our children.

## Federal Government Shutdown

While the Farm Service Agency (FSA) has been authorized to return to their offices and resume limited operations, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and co-located Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) staff have been directed not to return to their offices until further notice. With the federal shutdown still in effect, many SWCD staff do not have access to their offices, emails, computers, MAIL or other USDA resources. As a result, communication with your local SWCD may be limited until the shutdown is lifted.

Stark County SWCD can be contacted at [starkcountyswcd@gmail.com](mailto:starkcountyswcd@gmail.com) or by phone at **309-883-4759**. If you are having trouble reaching your local SWCD in the meantime, you may contact the AISWCD office at **217-744-3414** or email us [info@aiswcd.org](mailto:info@aiswcd.org).

We remain in close contact with NRCS and FSA and will continue to share updates as more information becomes available.

This situation also highlights why advocacy efforts are more important than ever! We are working closely with partners and lawmakers to push for stable, diversified funding sources that ensure SWCDs can continue serving Illinois communities, even during federal disruptions.

Many federal agencies continue only essential functions until the shutdown is completed ([redlandsdailyfacts.com](http://redlandsdailyfacts.com)).



## Thank you!

A special thanks to everyone who purchased trees, fish, and native plants from the Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District's fall sales. A special thank you to Alex Wulf for allowing us to use his trailer for transportation. Proceeds from these sales go toward SWCD program expenses. Please take a look at some of the items the Stark County SWCD office has to

offer, in stock. Nature guides, game cards, and other items make great Stocking Stuffers. Call or email ahead for curbside pick-up.



Hermann Brothers delivers fish to Stark SWCD office.



McCauley, Peterson, and volunteer helpers unload trees for the fall tree sale.



## Important Dates to Remember

November 27	Thanksgiving Day – Office Closed
November 28	SWCD – Office Closed
December 2-3	Winter Training SWCD – Office Closed
December 18	Board Meeting
December 24-25	Christmas – Office Closed
January 1	New Year's Day – Office Closed
January 6	SWCD Director Nomination Deadline
January 15	Board Meeting
January 19	Martin Luther King Holiday
February 6	SWCD's 83rd Annual Meeting/ February Board Meeting

# Gaining Training

Stark Soil and Water Conservation District staff attend a soil health training in Kewanee on September 19. Katie McCauley and Tracy Peterson joined local Conservation District employees to learn the basics of soil health and how to successfully implement soil health practices. Presenters included Pete Fendel, Illinois Central Community College;

Torey Colburn, American Farmland Trust; and Jim Isermann, Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership. Thank you to the Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership (ISAP) and Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) for hosting. In person training events are essential to providing accurate technical assistance to Stark's farmers and landowners.



Fendel shows layers of compaction in a soil pit south of Kewanee, IL.



Isermann guides participants in assessing soil health indicators.



Fendel and Isermann present a rain simulator, showcasing how cover can prevent soil loss and improve water quality.

## Black Hawk Conservation Choices Tour

On Tuesday, November 4th, 2025, the Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) held a Conservation Choices field day tour for Black Hawk East College students. Students from Black Hawk College instructor Cole Wright's soils class attended. The event began at 9:00 a.m. in the classroom with a brief program. From there, students traveled to the field to view a variety of conservation practices on college property and property owned by Endress Farms.

Students learned about conservation practices such as filter strips, cover crops, conservation tillage, critical area seeding, riparian forest buffer, grassed waterway, grade control structure, denitrifying bioreactor and terraces.

The tour is coordinated by Katie McCauley with assistance from Tracy Peterson (SWCD). A special thanks goes to Rumbold and Kuhn, Inc. and Streitmatter Land Improvement for helping to sponsor this event and to Endress Farms for allowing us to view their conservation practices.



Students smile following a tour of conservation choices.



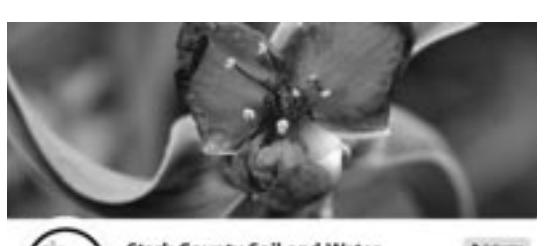
BHE students gather to get a closer look at conservation practices on Endress Farms.



McCauley and Wright speak on the pros and cons of conservation tillage and cover crops.

## Facebook Page

The Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District has its own **Facebook Fan Page**. Please check out the page, entitled: Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District. If you visit the page and click "like", you will receive periodic updates about Stark County SWCD programs and events. We use this page as one more tool to help promote our conservation programs, so we urge you to become a fan.



Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District  
800 followers | 104 following

# Denitrifying Bioreactor - Edge of Field Practices have an Edge

August 19th, local landowners and agriculture professionals banded together to attend a Denitrifying Bioreactor Field Day hosted by Marshall-Putnam Farm Bureau west of Henry, IL.

A denitrifying bioreactor is a conservation practice used to decrease nitrogen concentration. The denitrifying bioreactor is a structure containing a carbon source, installed to reduce the concentration of nitrate nitrogen in subsurface agricultural drainage flow by enhanced denitrification.

The denitrifying bioreactor is one of the several practices that may be used to help reduce excessive nitrate concentration in water from tile draining leaving crop fields. Typically, the bioreactor is installed at the end of a tile system, just before the drainage water enters a drainage ditch or stream. A water control structure is installed on the tile line, and this structure allows the operator to divert some of the drainage flow to the bioreactor chamber. During periods of high flow in the tile system, the structure is set to bypass excess flow without going through the bioreactor. Since the tile does not flow full most of the time, this strategy is a good way to make sure that most of the nitrate in the tile water is removed, without negatively affecting the ability of the tile system to drain. The bioreactor chamber is a pit excavated into the ground near the tile line. The pit is lined with plastic and filled with wood chips. The plastic is installed to keep the soil from migrating into the wood chips, and to make sure that the tile water stays in the wood chip

chamber long enough to adequately remove the nitrates. The pit is filled entirely with wood chips, and a protective layer of soil at least 2 feet deep is placed over the wood chips to protect the chamber from surface water and if vehicular traffic is expected over the site. Installation of the bioreactor involves plumbing as well as wood chips. Pipes connect the control structure in the main tile line with a distribution manifold (perforated pipe) at the beginning of the bioreactor chamber. At the other end of the chamber, a collector pipe gathers up the treated water and sends it through a structure, on out to the ditch or stream. The real work in the bioreactor is accomplished by denitrifying bacteria. These organisms colonize the wood chips, using the carbon in the wood as an energy source and reducing nitrates in the water to nitrogen gas. The bioreactor is designed to last at least 10 years.

Projects like this help meet the goals of the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS), funding is available for assistance on practices that support reducing sedimentation and nutrient loss issues that affect downstream ecosystems.

Thank you to our hosts and presenters: Illinois Land Improvement Contractors Association, Illinois Farm Bureau, Streitmatter Land Improvement, University of Illinois, NRCS, Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership, and host farmer Ethan Koehler.



Ryan Arch, ILCA, presents on the importance of engineering and meeting with contractors.



Ryan Arch, ILCA, and Ethan Koehler, farmer, show how water samples are taken to calculate the efficiency of the bioreactor. ([www.ilfb.org](http://www.ilfb.org))



Water sampling stations are located at either end of the denitrifying bioreactor.



Participants enjoy presentations and lunch. ([www.ilfb.org](http://www.ilfb.org))

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Thank you for supporting the Stark County Soil & Water Conservation District!



# Soil & Water Stewardship Week 2026

National Association of Conservation Districts' (NACD) Stewardship Week is one of the largest national programs to promote natural resource conservation. Celebrated annually since 1955 between the last Sunday in April and the first Sunday in May, NACD Stewardship Week reminds us of our individual responsibilities to care for natural resources.

The program relies on locally-led conservation districts sharing and promoting stewardship and conservation activities. Districts provide conservation and stewardship field days, programs, workshops and additional outreach efforts throughout their community to educate citizens about the need to care for our resources. Many district activities extend beyond the one-week observance to include an entire year of outreach.

The Stewardship concept involves personal and social responsibility, including a duty to learn



about and improve natural resources as we use them wisely, leaving a rich legacy for future generations.

One definition of Stewardship is "the individual's responsibility to manage his life and property with proper regard to the rights of others." E. William Anderson suggests stewardship "is essentially a synonym for conservation."

Stewardship Week helps to remind us all of the power each person has to conserve natural resources and improve the world. When everyone works together with their local conservation district, that power continuously grows. We have seen these good deeds multiply across the nation's network of conservation districts and the results are spectacular!

NACD's 71st Stewardship Week will be held April 27 – May 4,



(agsoilregen.com)



Students at 5th grade conservation day learned about stewardship week, 2024

2026, with the theme "Soil. Where It All Begins" celebrating the incredible power of soil to support life in all its forms. Soil is not just the ground we walk on. It is the starting point for healthy food, clean water, thriving habitats, and resilient communities. From backyard gardens to forests and city parks, everything begins with what is beneath our feet.

Soil does a lot more than grow plants. It holds water, cycles nutrients, and provides homes for billions of living organisms that help keep nature in balance. It keeps roots in place, helps

prevent flooding, and supports wildlife and people alike. The trees in our neighborhoods, the food on our tables, and the natural places we love all depend on healthy soils.

The Stark County SWCD will be using this theme for many of its educational programs throughout 2026.



## Sign up for Partners for Conservation Cost Share Program

The Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District is slated to receive an allocation from the Illinois Department of Agriculture for the Partners for Conservation Program in FY-2026. This state cost-share program may be used to install a variety of conservation practices (see charts for options). The Stark County SWCD administers this program locally, and technical assistance for conservation projects is provided by the SWCD. If you are interested in applying for a practice listed, please contact the Stark County SWCD to complete an application. Funding for well sealing projects is also available.

Practices installed must meet NRCS design standards and specifications to qualify for funding and cannot be started until the application is approved, and a design is finalized. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and prioritized by district goals. Funding is limited, but eligible projects may be retained on a waiting list until more funding is available.



Rye cover crop planting (extension.illinois.gov).



Choose objectives and plan for future goals (nrcs.usda.gov).

### STATE LIST OF ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES AND MAXIMUM COST-SHARE RATES (AND THE NUMBER OF YEARS PRACTICES MUST BE MAINTAINED)

PRACTICE CODE	PRACTICE	COST SHARE RATES	MAINTENANCE YEARS
327	Conservation Cover (Pollinators) (See Notes)	75% (10 Acres max)	5
329	No-till or Strip-till Planting System (acres) (See Notes)	\$30/acre (up to 3 years)	1
340	Cover Crop (acres)	75% or flat rate not to exceed scenario cost	1
342	Critical Area Planting (Temporary Cover, acres) (See Notes)	75%	N/A
342	Critical Area Planting (acres)	75%	10
345	Mulch-till (See notes)	N/A	
351	Well Decommissioning (Hand Dug)	75% not to exceed \$500	N/A
351	Well Decommissioning (Drilled) (See Notes)	75% not to exceed \$850	N/A
356	Dike	75%	20
362	Diversion (feet)	75%	10
393	Filter Strips (acres)(moved to appendix E)	75%	10
410	Grade Stabilization Structure (#)	75%	15
412	Grassed Waterway (acres)	75%	10
468	Lined Waterway or Outlet	75%	15
512	Pasture and Hay land Planting (acres) (See Notes)	75%	10
570	Rain Garden (See notes)	75% not to exceed \$1.40; \$2.17/sq ft for small scale.	3
600	Terrace, Narrow or Broad Base (feet)	75%	10
606	Subsurface Drain (feet) (See Notes)	75%	20
620	Underground Outlet (feet) (See Notes)	75%	20
630	Vertical Drain (Sinkhole)	75%	10
638	Water and Sediment Control Basin (# & feet) (See Notes)	75%	10

# Spring Tree and Fish Sale

The Stark County SWCD will be offering a variety of trees and shrubs for sale for spring planting. Check out the January 2026 issue of Conservation News for tree sale information and order forms. The SWCD will continue to sell a variety of potted evergreens, shade trees, shrubs, and fruit trees. Even though the drab winter months are just beginning, it's never too early to think about adding some green to your yard.

The SWCD will also offer several fish species for sale for pond stocking. An order form will be in the January newsletter.

Fish and Trees will be distributed at the SWCD in mid-April, and orders will be taken January through early April.



(lovethegarden.com).



Black eyed susan.  
(extension.illinois.edu)



White oak. (ar.inspiredpencil.com)



Native Illinois fish. (hbfisheries.com)

## Notice of Acceptance of Nominations - NOTICE -

To all persons of legal voting age who own or reside on land located within the boundaries of Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District. Beginning on November 6, 2025, nominations will be accepted for the two-year term of office of Director of the Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District at the District's Office at 7419B State Route 17, Toulon, Illinois 61483 during our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. To be considered for nomination as a candidate for the office of Director, nominees must provide proof of residency or ownership of land located within the boundaries of the District. Interested persons must respond by 4:30 p.m. on January 6, 2026.

## Notice of Election of Directors - NOTICE -

To all owners and occupiers of lands lying within the boundaries of the Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District: Notice is hereby given that an Annual Meeting and Election Will be held on the 6th day of February, 2026 - time and location to be announced. Three Directors will be elected to serve the Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District of the State of Illinois.

All persons, firms, or corporations who hold legal title or are in legal possession of any land lying within the boundaries of the said district are eligible to vote at said election whether as lessee, renter, tenant or otherwise.

Only such persons, firms, or corporations are eligible to vote.

Trevor Nelson, Chairman  
Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District.

# Notecards and Prints

The Stark County SWCD continues to offer printed notecards with illustrations by the late John Elliott of Toulon.

The notecards are A2 size (4.25 x 5.5 inches) Each set contains a mixture of barn, birds and other plant and wildlife artwork. Actual selection may vary.



John Elliott,  
1934 - 2016.

Notecard sets are \$15.00 each and are great to use for personal correspondence or to give as a gift. We are also offering 6" by 9" prints of select John Elliott images for \$10.00 each or all six for \$50.00. Pictured are samples of cards and prints. Cards and prints are available at the office. Please contact the Stark County SWCD for more information or to reserve your items.



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# Attention CRP Producers

As a reminder, if you have conservation practices enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), it is your responsibility to maintain the practice as its original design dimensions and acreage. Status Reviews are conducted on all practices prior to re-enrollment to ensure practices are being maintained according to your CRP contract and Conservation Schedule of Operations. If you have questions about your CRP practice, please contact the **USDA Service Center at (309)286-2261.**



## AMERICA RECYCLES DAY

BY NationalCalendarDay.com

Each year on November 15, millions of people across the United States take part in America Recycles Day. The day raises awareness about recycling and the purchasing of recycled products.

How we recycle and reuse products is important. For example, one-use water bottles flood America's waterways and landfills at a rate of 60 million per day. Reducing this number can be achieved with water filtration devices and using portable reusable drinking bottles and cups.

Reduce waste by repurposing and reusing old items. One of the best ways to do this is by shopping at secondhand stores. Not only does it prevent items from ending up in the landfill, but it also saves you money. The old adage, "one person's junk is another person's treasure," holds true. These stores offer more than you might imagine, from clothing and furnishings to kitchen items and replacement parts. If you've never shopped this way, consider it.

One area where we excel at recycling is aluminum. In fact, the U.S. recycles about 65% of its aluminum. That's more than any other recycled item.

- In America, 105,800 cans are recycled every minute.
- Your television can run for 3 hours from the energy saved by recycling one can.
- In 2019, an aluminum can was worth about 1.7 cents.
- The industry pays more than \$1 billion annually for recycled cans.

Your waste management professions are a

wealth of information regarding recycling.

They'll give you the hard facts and steer you in the right direction, too. The role of waste management goes far beyond garbage collection. In each community, they provide various services and programs designed to protect and reduce the impact we have on our environment.

### HOW TO OBSERVE

#### #AmericaRecyclesDay

Recycle, buy recycled goods and help teach others the benefits of recycling and continue to do so each day! Use #AmericaRecyclesDay to post on social media.

### AMERICA RECYCLES DAY HISTORY

The National Recycling Coalition created America Recycles Day in 1997. Each year, the President declares the day, encouraging Americans to commit to recycling. Since 2009, this day has been a program of Keep America Beautiful. Organizations host thousands of events across the United States to raise awareness about the importance of recycling and offer personal pledges that you can sign, committing to recycling and buying products made from recycled materials.

### Recycle FAQ

Q. Are there different types of recycling?

A. Yes. There are three main types of recycling. The first, and probably one you are most familiar with, is called primary recycling. Primary recycling is the process of recycling materials into more of the same items - glass bottles into glass bottles, plastic bottles into plastic bottles, paper into paper, cardboard boxes into cardboard boxes. The next type is secondary recycling. Similar to primary recycling in that



secondary recycling uses the same materials. However, the process creates something new. Plastic bottles become plastic furniture; rubber tires become playground turf. Finally, tertiary recycling chemically transforms a product into a new, usable product.

Q. What are some things I can recycle?

A. A shortlist of items you can begin recycling includes:

- paper
- plastic
- steel cans
- aluminum cans
- rubber
- cardboard
- food waste
- glass

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## Filter Strip Land Uses



### What it is

A strip of dense herbaceous vegetation such as grass, trees or shrubs that filters runoff and removes contaminants before they reach water bodies or water sources, such as wells. Filter strips are most effective when used in combination with other agronomic or structural conservation practices.

### How it helps

- The vegetation slows water flow and allow contaminants like sediment, chemicals and nutrients to collect in grass, trees and shrubs.
- Filter strips improve water quality for fish and other aquatic life.
- Grass, trees and shrubs provide cover for small birds, animals and pollinators.
- Ground cover reduces soil erosion.
- The vegetative strips move row crop operations further from a stream.

### Planning ahead

- Are adequate soil conservation measures installed above the filter strip?
- Are plants adapted to your soil type?
- Have you selected the correct plant species for the control you need?
- Consider including species beneficial for pollinators and butterflies such as milkweed.

### Tech Notes

- Filter strips are most effective on slopes of 5% or less.
- Filter strips for cropland must be at least 15 feet wide. Steeper slopes require wider strips.

% Slope	Minimum Width
0-10	15 feet
10-20	20 feet
20-30	25 feet

- A minimum of 50 feet width is required for filter strips on forestland.
- Do not use a filter strip as a roadway.
- Filter strips will be less effective under snow or during frozen conditions.
- Avoid drift when applying herbicides on surround cropland.
- Controlled grazing may be allowed if filter strips are dry and firm.

### Maintenance

- Repair rills and small channels that may have developed.
- Control grazing if livestock have access to filter strips.
- Mow (and harvest if possible) grasses several times per year to encourage dense vegetative growth. For ground nesting wildlife, avoid mowing during nesting periods.
- Restoration may be needed if sediment accumulates.

# New Employee - Administrative Coordinator

Hello! My name is Tracy Peterson, and I'm excited to join the Stark County Soil & Water Conservation District as the new Administrative Coordinator. Born and raised in Stark County, I have a deep love for our community and the natural beauty around us.

Before this role, I spent over 10 years working at the State Bank of Toulon, where I gained valuable experience in administration and customer service. After that, I took some time off to focus on raising my two wonderful children—an experience that has shaped who I am today.

I'm a proud wife and mama, and I'm passionate about serving our community while supporting the important work of protecting and managing our natural resources. In my role, I'll be helping coordinate programs, manage office operations, and ensure our conservation initiatives run smoothly.

I look forward to connecting with community members, partners, and visitors!



Pictured: Peterson with her family at the Illinois State Fair.

## Our Partners

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## Legislator Contact Information

**Senator Neil Anderson**  
47th District- Republican Caucus Chair  
  
District Office:  
103 North College Ave  
#201  
Aledo, IL 61231  
309-230-7584  
Email: senatorneilanderson@gmail.com



**Senator Li Arellano, Jr. (R)**  
37th District  
  
District Office:  
86 South Galena Ave.  
Suite 2  
Dixon, IL 61021  
(779) 251-5003  
Website: www.senatorli.com



**Representative Travis Weaver**  
93rd District  
  
District Office:  
337 Court St,  
Pekin, IL 61554  
309-204-6514  
  
Website: repweaver.com



**Representative Ryan Spain (R)**  
73rd District  
**Deputy Minority Leader**  
District Office:  
5407 N. University St., Arbor Hall  
Suite B  
Peoria, IL 61614  
(309) 690-7373  
Email: repryanspain@gmail.com



**Board of Directors - pictured L-R:**  
Trevor Nelson (Chairman), Keith Bush (Treasurer),  
David Sager (Asc. Director), Phil Webster (Director),  
Nick Rumbold (Director), Ethan Ely (Vice Chairman).



Tracy Peterson,  
Administrative  
Coordinator



Katie McCauley,  
Resource  
Conservationist



Zane Downing,  
Soil Conservationist



Erika Luft,  
District Conservationist

## Scholarship Donations

The Stark County SWCD accepts donations for the scholarships it administers on an ongoing basis. Anyone is welcome to make a cash donation to our scholarship in care of the Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District.



**THE STARK COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
Is a local not-for-profit unit of government that works in conjunction with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to promote the conservation of soil, water, and other natural resources.

### SWCD Staff

Resource Conservationist – Katie McCauley  
Administrative Coordinator - Tracy Peterson

### NRCS Staff

Soil Conservationist – Zane Downing  
District Conservationist – Erika Luft

Stark County SWCD board meeting are held on the third Thursday of eachmonth, excluding May and October.

**Stark County SWCD**  
7419B State Route 17 - Toulon, IL 61483  
Office Hours: Monday-Friday  
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Phone (309) 286-2261 ext. #3  
Email: katie.mccauley@il.nacdnet.net

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