



**MORGAN COUNTY SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Strategic Plan

**Our mission is to advocate
for and provide services to
improve and sustain the
natural resources of
Morgan County.**



2024

What is a SWCD?

Overview

A Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a governmental subdivision of the State of Indiana, and a public body corporate and politic exercising public powers; the only local unit of government responsible for coordinating the conservation of our soil, water, and related natural resources. It is governed by a supervisory board, consisting of 5 supervisors, each a resident of the District. Three supervisors are elected positions and the remaining two are appointed. The District receives its statutory authority from Indiana District Law (Indiana Code 14-32-5). The SWCD does not have the power to tax or bond, does not have the power of eminent domain, and does not have regulatory power. It cannot replace or duplicate functions of other local government units. Financing SWCD operations is accomplished through a combination of appropriations from state and local government units, money earned through SWCD activities, grants, and contributions from private sources.

History of Morgan County SWCD

Following the devastation of the Dust Bowl in the 1930s, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt recommended the Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Act be signed into law by all state governors. This act gave states a step-by-step guide to create conservation districts and listing their powers and responsibilities. On July 8, 1946, after landowners petitioned for a Soil and Water Conservation District in Morgan County, the Secretary of the State of Indiana, Rue J. Alexander issued a certificate of organization for the Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District, and certified that it had been duly organized as a governmental subdivision of the State of Indiana and as a public body corporate and politic. Shortly after that, the board held their first meeting and from that point on, the Morgan County SWCD has had many board supervisors, staff, and volunteers that have made the District a reliable source for conservation education and assistance for citizens and landowners in Morgan County.

Purpose

- To maintain current and relevant information about the soil, water, and natural resources, of Morgan County.
 - To identify and prioritize soil, water, and natural resource concerns within Morgan County.
 - To provide education and educational materials about the soil, water, and natural resources of Morgan County to the public.
 - To connect landowners and users with sources of technical and financial assistance for implementing conservation practices.
 - Provide local leadership in identifying natural resources needs and developing comprehensive plans and programs to address those needs.
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Mission

Our mission is to advocate for and provide services to improve and sustain the natural resources of Morgan County.

Crucial Partnerships

Partnerships in natural resource conservation and protection are crucial to a District's success. We actively seek and maintain partnerships with organizations, groups, and individuals that can help the District achieve strategic goals. Our partners may be governmental, nonprofit, public, commercial and private organizations, and individual citizens. Our capacity is expanded with the cooperation and collaboration of great partnerships. Partnering with like-minded groups creates a larger impact on our goals. Some of these partnerships include:

Conservation Volunteers
Land owners of Morgan County
Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
Indiana State Department of Agriculture
Indiana State Soil Conservation Board
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services
USDA-Farm Service Agency
Purdue Cooperative Extension Service
Indiana Department of Environmental Management
State of Indiana Cooperative Invasive Management
Urban Soil Health Initiative, Indiana
Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative, Indiana
Resilient Indiana Technical Assistance Program
Women 4 the Land
National and State Weed Wrangle Organization
People Helping Improve Soil Health Working Group
Hoosier Environmental Council
Indiana Woodland Owners Association
Indiana Woodland Stewards
Indiana District Employees Association
National Association of Conservation Districts
National District Employees Association
Morgan County Native and Invasive Plant Partnership (MCNIPP)
Morgan County Farm Bureau
Federal, state, and local legislators
Local Morgan County Businesses
Morgan County Council
Morgan County Commissioners
Morgan County Surveyor
Morgan County Planning and Zoning
Morgan County Partnership for Water Quality (MS4/Stormwater)
Morgan County Health Department
Morgan County Recycling
Morgan County Fair Association
Morgan County Parks and Recreation
Morgan County Beef Cattle Association
Martinsville City Parks
Central Indiana Land Trust
Morgan County Master Gardener's
Morgan County Schools
Morgan County FFA Chapters
4-H, Scouts, and other Specialty Clubs

Critical Natural Resource Goals and Objectives for Morgan County

- Water Conservation
- Soil Conservation
- Invasive Species Management
- Environmental Biodiversity



Water Conservation

Morgan county has abundant water resources. However, protecting our watersheds from soil, silt, and other contaminants is becoming increasingly important. Biological Diversity in streams and the recreational use of them, such as fishing, boating, and wildlife viewing are at risk. Integrity of safe surface and groundwater are at risk of contamination as industrial and urban growth occurs. Non-Conservation based farming methods also put our waterways at risk.

In order to promote good stewardship and enhancement of our water resources in Morgan County, our strategy is to:

- Incentivize implementation of water conservation practices in Morgan County through a cost share program.
- Advocate and take appropriate action on water quality or quantity issues.
- Establish a Morgan County Hoosier Riverwatch Program
- Provide a minimum of 4 education events that encourage water conservation.
- Bi-annually, hold a pond clinic, educating landowners on care and maintenance of water resources.
- Annually, participate in the Morgan County Partnership for Water Quality and assist with White River Clean-up efforts.
- Represent citizens at a local level through water studies and water testing.
- Encourage, annually, a minimum of 5 landowners to incorporate water conservation practices on their land through local, state, or federal conservation programs.
- Work with other Indiana Conservation Partnership organizations to provide educational programs to reduce sediment and nutrient loads in Morgan County Waterways.



Soil Conservation

Soil is one of our most important natural resources. When conventionally tilled soils are left bare and unprotected, they are subject to erosion, the loss of essential nutrients like carbon and organic matter, and become less productive. This loss can be seen in both rural and urban areas of the District. For the health and production of Morgan County soils, an increase in conservation cropping and farming practices are essential. The District will provide education on soil health practices and assistance to landowners wishing to implement these practices in hopes of seeing a 10% increase in soil conservation practices by 2029.

In order to accomplish this, our strategy is to:

- Host a minimum of 3 soil health educational events, annually.
- Promote use of the District's No-Till Drills, especially for native and conservation plantings.
- Incentivize implementation of soil conservation practices in Morgan County through a cost share program.
- Encourage soil sampling prior to nutrient applications through federal, state, and local programs.
- Encourage soil health awareness in youth through a minimum of 3 soil health events annually.
- Seek opportunities to provide financial assistance to landowners wishing to implement soil health practices and administer those programs locally, when possible.
- Continue to assist Morgan County Recycling with Tox-Away Days to prevent improper disposal of contaminants into the soils and waterways of Morgan County



Invasive Species Management

Invasive species are any plant, animal, insect or plant disease that are not native to an area that can cause harm to the environment, impact the diversity of native species, reduce wildlife habitat or disrupt important ecosystem functions. Invasive species limit land use, degrade natural resources, and inhibit recreational uses. They also negatively impact fisheries, agricultural and forestry industries, destabilize soil and alter water resources. The spread of invasive species can be seen in all areas of Morgan County, rural and urban. The District will provide educational information, technical assistance, and financial assistance, when available, to control the spread of these invasive species that impair our natural resources.

In order to accomplish this, our strategy is to:

- Provide financial support to employ an Invasive Species Specialist for the District, who will manage programs related to invasives species, forestry, and native plantings.
- Provide educational outreach to the public through presentations and printed material.
- Support and manage the Morgan County Native and Invasive Plant Partnership (MCNIPP), with the Invasive Species Specialist ensuring that it's plan of work is being completed.
- Host a minimum of 6 Weed Wrangle events, annually, on public lands, providing educational outreach to the public and provide assistance in removing invasives in the public parks.
- Complete a minimum of 10 property surveys for invasive species, including treatment and control instructions at no charge to the landowner.
- Incentivize invasive species control and removal in Morgan County through a cost share program.
- Provide educational outreach and training on invasive species with a minimum of 20 events a year. These may be at a Morgan County Native and invasive Plant Partnership meeting, a special interest group event, civic organization event , or public event.
- Meet with a minimum of 3 home owner's associations, conservancy districts, and street or highway departments a year to provide education on invasive species control.





Environmental Biodiversity

Habitat with biodiversity is important because it supports healthy ecosystems that provide vital services for life, including humans. Biodiversity also protects against climate change, fights disease, and supports communities. However, Indiana's biodiversity has been impacted by urbanization and climate change. Losing biodiversity can destabilize ecosystems and risk their collapse. Morgan County hosts a wide variety of ecosystems and biodiversity in each of them is equally important. The Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District will support activities that create more diverse habitats throughout the county.

In order to accomplish this, our strategy is to:

- Provide a minimum of 3,000 native woody plants, annually, to Morgan County residents through a seedling give away program.
- Incentivize biodiversity through a cost share program for native plantings.
- Bi-Annually, host a forestry or other land management workshop that focuses on diversity and natural resources protection. (ex. forestry, pollinators, livestock)
- Increase pollinator habitat in Morgan County by dispersing a minimum of 10 pounds of native pollinator habitat seed annually to the public.
- Provide conservation and soil health services to small scale farmers and urban areas in Morgan County through the Urban Soil Health Program.
- Annually, distribute a minimum of 200 pounds of cover crop seed or pollinator habitat seed for home and garden use in both urban and rural areas.
- Develop a cost-share, discounted, or free rental program for the District's no-till seed drill when used to plant native seed for habitat purposes.
- Provide financial support to the Indiana Woodland Stewardship Program, which produces quarterly printed materials to educate woodland owners.



Adoption Statement

This plan was adopted by the Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors, Associate Supervisors, and staff on the 14th day of August, 2024.

SWCD Supervisory Board

Douglas Peine, Chairman
Debra Carter, Vice-Chairman
Patricia Clark, Secretary
Stan Diamond, Supervisor
Roy McGuffey, Supervisor

SWCD Associate Supervisors

Thomas Carter, Associate Supervisor
Douglas Johnstone, Associate Supervisor
Bill Mitchell, Associate Supervisor
John Phillips, Associate Supervisor

SWCD Staff

Lisa MacPhee, SWCD Director
David Mow, Invasive Species Specialist

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



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