



Monroe County SWCD News

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District Commissioners

Mervin Mc Danel
Chairman

Donald Niebuhr
Vice Chairman

Robert Scott
Commissioner

Marvin Wirtjes
Commissioner

Joe Pyle
Commissioner

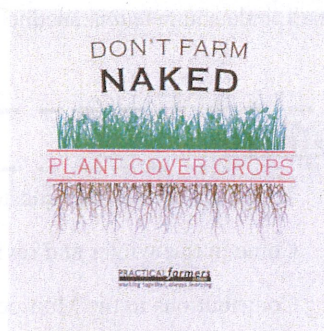
Assistant Commissioners:

Colleen Putnam

Jim Nelson

Heavy Promotion of Cover Crops

Why are cover crops being promoted so heavily? If you are wondering the answer to this question, you are not alone. Though many producers are starting to incorporate the use of cover crops between harvest and planting seasons, there are still people who wonder whether it would be a good practice to begin on their own operation. In the last year, Monroe County SWCD and partners have financially assisted in the planting of more than 770 acres of cover crops. Here are a few questions that you can ask yourself to see if cover crops might be an asset to your operation. Would you like to reduce soil erosion and improve the overall health of the soil on your farm? Would you like to improve water quality in your area? Are you a producer who would like extra forage in the winter months, or would you like to see more wildlife on your farm? If you answered yes to any of the questions above, contact our office so we can answer your questions, give you information about the program and/or sign you up so you can begin your adventure with cover crops.



Farmer's Almanac 2016 Fun Facts

- ♦ The last estimated frost date in the spring is April 20, and the first estimated frost date in the fall is October 12.
- ♦ The best days to seed hay, grains, and forage crops: March 23, March 24, April 19, and April 20.
- ♦ The best days to plant beans or corn are April 8, April 9, April 12, April 13, May 16, May 17, and May 18.
- ♦ The best days to plant cover crops or winter grains are August 6, August 7, and August 8.
- ♦ The best days for harvesting are September 25-September 29, October 22-October 26, November 21, November 22, and November 28.

This and much more can be found in the *Farmer's Almanac For The Year 2016* (199th edition).

Miller Creek Watershed Update

We have about a year and a half left of the Phase III Nutrient & Sediment Reduction project for Miller Creek. A Phase III project was started in July 2014 to focus on nutrient reduction practices entering Miller Creek. Phase III is modeled after Iowa's Reduction Strategy due to the Gulf of Mexico hypoxia problem. By offering cost-share on Nutrient Management tools, the Monroe SWCD is educating and helping producers determine a strategy for their operation in preventing excess nutrient runoff. These tools will help not only improve water quality, but producers will over time be able to see the benefits to their operations. Some tools/ practices that are available for cost share are:

- GPS Soil Grid Sampling • • Late Spring Nitrate Testing • • Fall Stalk Nitrate Testing •
- Nitrification Inhibitor(Nitrapyrin only, with fall applied anhydrous only) •
- Cover Crops • • No-Till / Strip Till •
- 4R Concept Application/Management (Right Time, Right Place, Right Rate, Right Source) •

These practices offered are time sensitive and need to be board approved before application begins. If you are interested or would like more information please contact Linda Shumate the SWCD Watershed Coordinator, at 641-932-5144 Ext. 307 or email linda.shumate@ia.nacdn.net.

Tidbits

- ♦ 75% funding can be requested to help with cost-share on projects in Lake Miami watershed.
- ♦ Come in this winter and review or revise your conservation plan before planting season gets here.
- ♦ Contributions to the Monroe SWCD are used to purchase educational materials, fund scholarships, assist with office supplies, meeting room expenses, and much more. Such contributions are always appreciated and welcome.
- ♦ Pheasants Forever Wildlife Biologist, Shane Weinberg is available to answer questions about CRP. Call the office at 932-5144 ext. 3 and we will get you in touch with him.
- ♦ Article available at the office by Jim Gillespie, IDALS-DSCWQ, about protecting our resources, come get your copy today!

A Note to Monroe County Contractors:

First of all, we would like to say thank you for another great year. Secondly, the District has decided to hold contractor meetings every other year with 2016 being a "by" year. However, the technicians are more than happy to work with you one on one. We are available to answer any questions or speak with you regarding any concerns you have i.e.. questions about the new check out sheets etc. Feel free to contact technicians at 641-932-5144, ext. 3.

Financial Report

IA Financial Incentive (IFIP)	
Beginning Obligation	\$135,846.95
Beginning Bal.....	\$0.00
FY15 Allocation.....	\$126,593.50
Funds Spent	\$136,831.03
Funds Obligated.....	\$93,698.54
Recalled.....	\$31,910.88
Practice Installed w/Funds Spent	
Grade Stabilization Structures— 6	
Terraces — 7210 ft.	
Basins — 32	
Summer Incentives — 50.5	
Management Practices— IFIP	
Funds Spent	\$19,605.00
Practice Installed w/Funds Spent	
Cover Crops—323.30	

IIIM Budgets FY2015

Reap Practices	
Beginning Obligations.....	\$3,960.00
Beginning Bal.	\$0.00
FY15 Allocation	\$10,062.58
Funds Spent	\$3,471.00
Funds Obligated	\$8,315.39
Recalled.....	\$2,236.19
Practice Installed w/Funds Spent	
Forest Stand Improvement—30.8acres	
Reap Forestry & Native Grass	
Beginning Obligation.....	\$6,288.00
Beginning Bal.	\$0.00
Fy15 Allocation	\$3,999.87
Funds Spent	\$8,156.25
Funds Obligated	\$1,920.00
Recalled	\$211.62
Practice Installed w/Funds Spent	
Forest Stand Improvement — 41.1 acres	

IM Budgets 2015

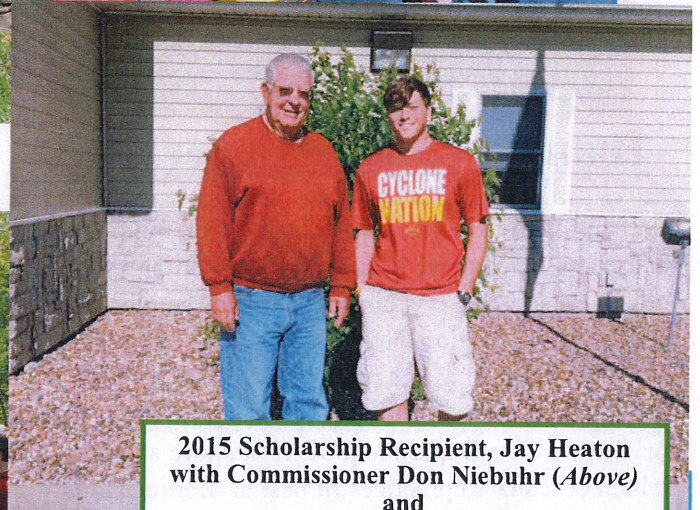
Water Quality Initiative	
Funds Spent	\$5202.50
Practice Installed w/Funds Spent	
Cover Crops— 280.1 acres	
No Interest Loans	
Beginning Obligation.....	\$12,000.00
Beginning Bal.	\$0.00
FY15 Allocation.....	\$0.00
Funds Spent.....	\$11,784.28
Funds Obligated.....	\$0.00
Recalled.....	\$215.72
Practice Installed w/Funds Spent	
Water & Sediment Control Basin—6	
Rathbun Special Project—WSPP	
Funds Spent	\$5192.47
Practices Installed w/Funds Spent	
Terraces— 1950 ft.	
Basins—7	
Commissioner/ Office Expense	
FY 15 Allocation	\$2,000.00
Supplemental.....	\$800.00
Mileage.....	\$652.47
Supplies.....	\$824.22
Postage	\$490.37
NACD Dues	\$775.00
Education Supplies.....	\$21.46
Advertising.....	\$87.25

Monroe County SWCD: A Year In Review

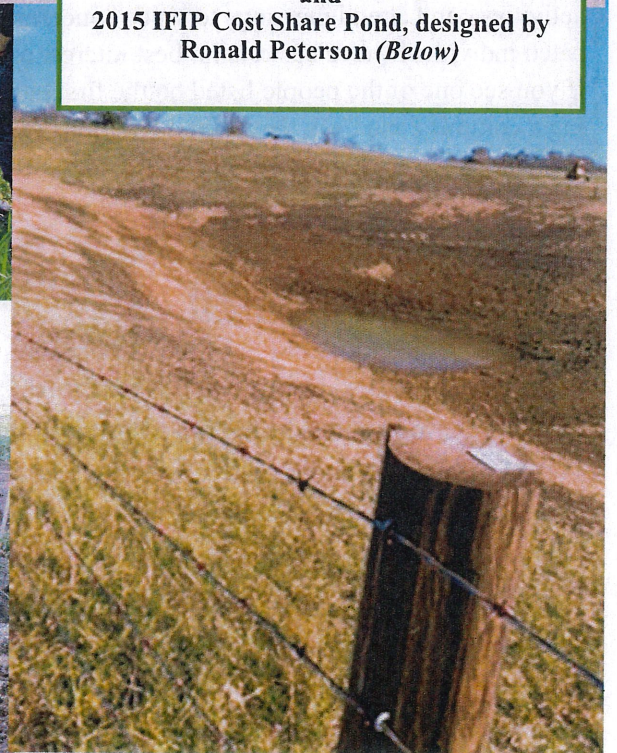
Trees For Threes: Albia Third Graders learn about nature at Lake Miami. (*Below, and Right*)



Albia Third Graders learning about the wetland located at Lake Miami (*Above*) and 2015 Bioreactor Field Day (*Below*)



2015 Scholarship Recipient, Jay Heaton with Commissioner Don Niebuhr (*Above*) and 2015 IFIP Cost Share Pond, designed by Ronald Peterson (*Below*)



REAP– Resource Enhancement and Protection

You may have heard a lot about how the Monroe County SWCD, and partner IDALS-DSCWQ help producers with cost-share on anything from grade stabilization structures to terraces and basins. You may not know, however, that we also have a program called REAP. This program can help with windbreaks, tree planting, forest stand improvement, forest buffers, and prescribed grazing, along rotational grazing and native grass establishment. We work one on one with landowners to put practices in place to protect water quality, and try to prevent major sediment loss.



Thank A Commissioner

Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners sometimes have a thankless job because people don't know exactly how much these people do for the community. From education to promotion, they increase awareness of the necessity of soil conservation. The commissioners participate in Farm Bureau Ag Day and with assistance from the County Conservation Board, organize an educational day at Lake Miami for Albia third graders. The district also offers a yearly scholarship and partners with IDALS-DSCWQ in an internship program. With the help of Cargill, Inc., they provide corn for wildlife, free of charge, to the community. Commissioners are a liaison between landowners/operators, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship-DSCWQ, and the NRCS field office. They decide which cost shared practices fit best in Monroe County and figure the average cost of them., support local watershed activities, and attend meetings to voice concerns of producers and lobby for funding of cost share projects. These dedicated individuals have customers' best interest in mind when determining financial, farming and environmental needs. If you see one of the people listed on the first page, give them a big thank you, and if you are interested in ever being a commissioner, ask them some questions to see if working with the Monroe County SWCD would be a good fit for you.

Meet Sammy Soil



Sammy Soil is a soil conservation icon for NRCS. Sammy started as a cartoon character to help teach children about soil conservation and the need for soil management. Working with educators, and NRCS staff, Sammy quickly became a valuable teaching tool and now serves as a mascot for the agency. He was first created in 1967 by Ernest Whitaker, a district conservationist, in Tennessee. In the 1970's NRCS employees in Mississippi transformed Sammy into the mascot. Since then Sammy has spread throughout the nation. He has taken many different forms over the years from coloring books to costumes. He even has decided to make an appearance at a few Monroe County Farms this past year.

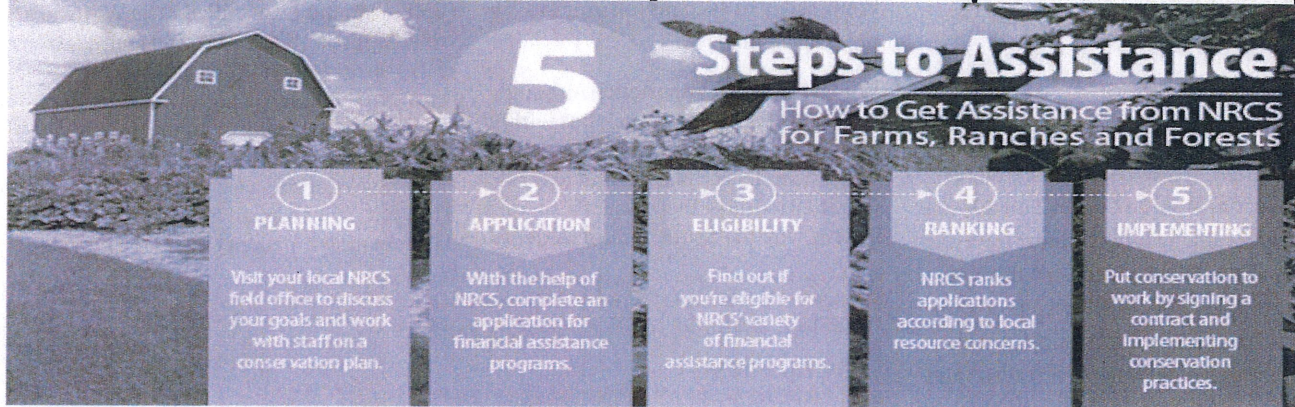
Below: Sammy makes an appearance at a Monroe County Farm this Fall.



Following this page we have included a Sammy Soil Coloring Page.

Programs Available through NRCS/IDALS/DSCWQ/

<u>Environmental Quality Incentives Programs</u>	<u>Conservation Stewardship Program</u>	<u>Water Quality Initiative Program</u>	<u>IFIP</u>
- Provides financial and technical assistance to landowners to develop and implement conservation practices. A contract plan will help specific natural resource concerns.	- Assists agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities addressing resource concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance the higher payment	- Provides a per acre incentive for producers to apply cover crops to existing fields. As the Nutrient Management Strategy becomes a larger part of a total planning package, producers can see incorporating this practice will improve their soils health.	- This program allows landowners to implement a practice such as structure, terrace and basins. IFIP will cost share up to 50% of the estimated cost of these practices. Requirements are that a landowner owns minimum of 10 acres contiguously with a minimum of \$2,500 annual agricultural income from the property.



Low Interest Loan Program: This program offers financial assistance when implementing practices such as terraces, basins, grade stabilizations etc. Working with your local lender at a 3% interest rate can make conservation more affordable. These loans can be used in conjunction with State and Federal programs or stand alone.

INFORMATION CORNER

Did you know...

We all NEED trees. Oxygen, the gas found in the air that every single cell in your body needs is produced by trees.

How?

When you exhale your body releases the gases that your cells produce. This includes the carbon dioxide made by your body, and the amounts of carbon dioxide that you inhale. But, what do trees have to do with this process you ask? When humans exhale, all carbon dioxide that is released into our environment is soaked up by tree leaves and used to produce sugar, which is a tree's source of food. The trees then, in return, release the gases they don't use back into the air.

Can you guess which gas that is? Yes, Oxygen.

Trees are also beneficial in many other ways. Trees save water. The shade from trees slow down water evaporation on lawns, and as trees grow they increase atmospheric moisture. Trees can also prevent soil erosion. They slow runoffs and hold soil in place. Trees also absorb many more pollutant gases than just carbon dioxide. They absorb nitrogen oxides, ammonia, sulfur dioxide, and ozone. By absorbing the things they do trees filter the air we breathe and help keep it clean.

Therefore, we don't just like trees we NEED trees.



Cedar Creek Watershed

The Cedar Creek Watershed is a large watershed composed of 14 sub-watersheds extending into five counties, twice the size of Soap Creek! The headwaters start in Lucas County and at the Appanoose - Monroe County line where it extends northward into Marion County. From there the stream outlets into the Des Moines River south-east of Tracy, IA in Mahaska County. The Total drainage area is 269,511 acres with 55% of the watershed in Monroe County.

Due to severe flooding and erosion problems in the Cedar Creek Watershed, the Monroe County Soil & Water began rallying local support from the four adjoining counties in which the watershed lies. Our District took the lead in establishing a working agreement between other political subdivisions; SWCD's, County Board of Supervisors and towns that lie in the watershed to address these issues and improve water quality of the stream. With the local support from these groups, a Watershed Management Authority (WMA) was established August 13th 2015, formally know as the (non-profit) **South Central IA Cedar Creek WMA**.

What is a WMA? It is a formal working agreement (Chapter 28E of Iowa) filed with the State between two or more political subdivisions, such as cities and counties (Board of Supervisors and Soil & Water Conservation Districts). Watershed Management Authorities (WMAs) have no regulatory/enforcement authority and cannot acquire property by eminent domain or taxing authority.

What is the WMA purpose? Members of the 28E will collaborate, discuss and assist with the development of educational and public engagement campaigns; plan goals and objectives and create a watershed plan to address the resource concerns, then implement

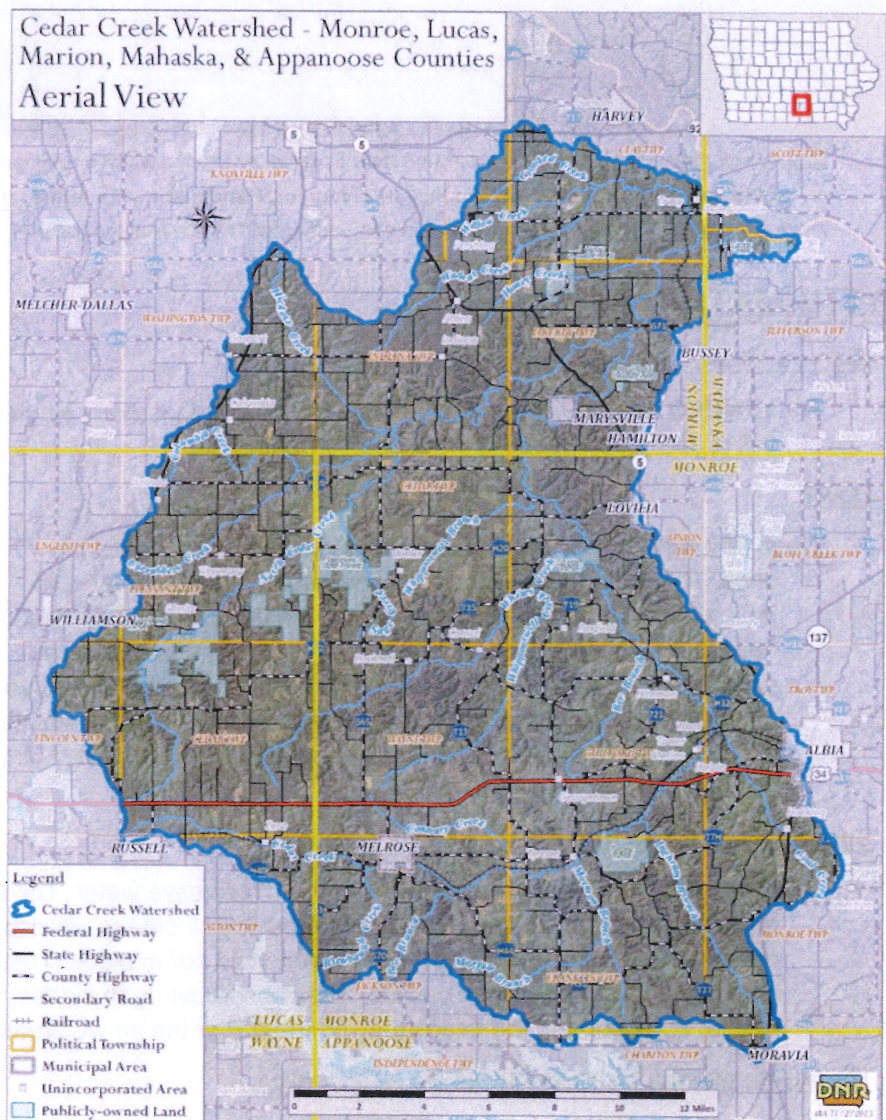
best management practices addressing these concerns.

Where & When does the WMA meet?

The facilitation office for the WMA is the Monroe County SWCD USDA/NRCS office located at 1701 south B St. Albia. Monthly meetings are pre-determined at each meeting according to location and availability. Meetings are held last Wednesday of each month unless also pre-determined.

Why is the WMA important? Although the majority of Cedar Creek lies within Monroe County, it will also take the effort from Lucas, Marion and Mahaska Counties to make this project a success! That is why the **South Central IA Cedar**

Creek WMA is asking for community support. As a nonprofit organization it will be crucial for local funding and support for many years to come for purposes of implementing conservation and flood control practices within the watershed. The WMA must take steps in completing an assessment of the watershed. This will help to determine priority areas greatly affected and where Best Management Practices (BMPs) should be installed. The WMA would appreciate if you would complete the enclosed survey and mail or return to the Monroe County SWCD office. For more information contact Linda Shumate WMA, Secretary/SWCD Watershed Coordinator at 641-932-5144 Ext. 305 or email linda.shumate@ia.nacdn.net.



Do You Want To Know What Soils Are On Your Farm?

Launched on August 16, 2005, Web Soil Survey (WSS) provides soil data and information produced by the National Cooperative Soil Survey. It is operated by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and provides access to the largest natural resource information system in the world. NRCS has soil maps and data available online for more than 95 percent of the nation's counties and anticipates having 100 percent in the near future. The site is updated and maintained online as the single authoritative source of soil survey information.

Soil surveys can be used in a vast array of disciplines from farm planning, to engineering and biotechnology. Onsite investigation is needed in some cases, such as soil quality assessments and certain conservation and engineering applications. As a producer, you can use the website as a quick reference for yourself online, as well as print the information you need in order to refer to it later. For more detailed information, contact the Albia USDA Service Center and ask for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. We have instructions on use of this public service, as well as staff who can walk through the process with you.

Link to Web Soil Survey:

<http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

History of CRP

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) began when the 1985 Farm Bill was signed by Ronald Reagan on December 23, 1985, but the history of CRP starts many years before. In the spring of 1935, Hugh Hammond Bennett "The Father of Soil Conservation" was giving a speech in a congressional meeting about the necessity of soil conservation. As he spoke, a dust bowl darkened the city. This gave Bennett the dramatic touch he needed to prove his point. Bennett's campaign made critics of environmentalists into major allies and believers in the conservation of our soil.

Fast forward to the 1950's. Surpluses of farm commodities were increasing and farm income was massively declining because of it. A solution was needed, but Congress did not want to take away price supports they offered on commodities. Congress did, however, agree on an alternative. This brought forth voluntary sign-up to let crop ground sit idle in turn for "rental" payments to farmers. Does this sound familiar? It was a very environmentally friendly program, but with time and technology, producers began farming this ground again.

By the 1980's, low crop prices and excess surpluses were back. Congress also had pressure from environmentalists to do something to conserve soil and prevent erosion. In 1985, CRP became a solution to these problems. According to John Block, USDA Secretary (1981-1986), CRP is a good opportunity to "take fragile land out of production and put the good land in production". This helped to not only protect our soil, but provide habitat to many types of wildlife. Tom Vilsack, USDA Secretary, says that CRP makes it "easier for farmers to do what's right for the land and right for the environment and wildlife".

If you would like to learn more, we encourage you to watch the videos at the links provided below. If you are interested in CRP, feel free to come in to your local USDA Service Center and ask any questions you may have.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/technical/nra/ceap/?cid=stelprdb1041269>

<http://usdaonline.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=588d05579d3045479e36d2abf6ab5456>

Calendar of Events



- ♦ **April 11th** - Iowa Envirothon—20th Anniversary
- ♦ **April TBA**— Trees for Threes
- ♦ **April 24– May 1** “Soil & Water Conservation Week”
- ♦ **May 5th** Farm Bureau Agricultural Day
- ♦ **Aug. 30– Sept. 1** Farm Progress Show; Boone, Iowa
- ♦ **Commissioner Meetings are tentatively the first Monday of each Month.**

*A **HUGE** thank you goes out to our contributors: past, present and future. Without you, our community, educational activities and awards would not be possible.*

Monroe County USDA Service Center

District Personnel

Linda Shumate— SWCD Watershed Coordinator
Brooke Bodkins— Conservation Technical Assistant

ELYON Contract Personnel

Deborah Morgan—Clerical Specialist

IDALS-DSC Personnel

Diana Williams—State Conservation Assistant
Ronald Peterson—State Soil Conservation Technician

USDA-NRCS Staff:

Margaret Cope—District Conservationist
Hannah Grimm—Soil Conservationist
Michael Gibbs—Federal Soil Conservation Technician

Pheasants Forever Staff:

Shane Weinberg—Farm Bill Biologist

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Monroe County SWCD

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