



April 2018

Spring?

Are you desperately waiting for the weather to warm up and the sunshine to peak through the clouds and the ground to magically warm up? Good luck. It looks like it's never going to happen, ever!

So with that in mind, here are some tips to keep your brain occupied while pacing around the house anxious to get outside.

For Your Yard:

- Do you have any areas that are having trouble draining properly, are you losing soil to a storm drain or tile? Make a plan to minimize soil loss and keep streams clean.
- Do you have bare or weedy areas that need some sprucing up? Try a pollinator-specific planting to help increase the monarch butterfly population.
- Do a little homework before you bring new plantings into your yard. Invasive species are commonly sold and can wreak havoc on native plants.

Upcoming Events

May 15th, 1-3 p.m.: Big Pine Creek Watershed Meeting and Streamside Presentation

May 16th, 3:30-5:00 p.m.: Oak and Woodland land management and financial assistance hike

June 1st, 7:30 p.m.-1:00 p.m.: Soil Health Field Day- "Building a Competitive Advantage with Conservation"

July 25-30th: Benton County Fair Cover Crop Plot

August 18th: Stream Clean-up

September 12th: Farm to Fork

October: Big Pine Creek History Tour



Spring? Continued....

For Your Farm:

- Do you have buffer areas along streams and ditches to help prevent erosion?
- Are you considering using cover crops to help hold soil in place in dormant months?
- Do you need a structure or grassed waterway to prevent a small gully from becoming a tunnel to the inner core of the Earth?

If you need any technical or financial assistance with these items contact the Benton County SWCD.

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Big Pine Creek Water Monitoring Update

For the last two years, Greg Bright and his colleagues at Commonwealth Biomonitoring have conducted biological assessment in the Big Pine Creek watershed. This biological assessment captures populations and diversity of fish and benthic macro-invertebrate communities in the creek.

In 2017, Greg and his team captured and identified forty different species of fish at eleven sampling sites across the watershed. Two pollution intolerant species, Longear Sunfish and Northern Hogsuckers, and nine species of darters, indicate relatively healthy environmental conditions.



Benthic (meaning “bottom-dwelling”) macroinvertebrates are small aquatic animals and the aquatic larval stages of insects. They lack a backbone, are visible without the aid of a microscope and are found in and around water bodies during some period of their lives. Benthic macroinvertebrates are often found attached to rocks, vegetation, logs and sticks or burrowed into the bottom sand and sediments.

According to 2017 results, sixty-seven species of benthic macroinvertebrates were found in the Big Pine watershed. This collection included mayflies and caddisflies, both considered to be aquatic insect groups that are intolerant of poor habitat and water quality. Even more importantly, the diversity of species at these sites has improved as much as 10%, exhibiting water quality progress driven by the efforts of the Big Pine Creek watershed project.

Sampling will continue for its third year in 2018. If you are interested in learning more, Greg Bright (Commonwealth Biomonitoring) will be presenting more detailed results at the May 15 Big Pine Steering Committee meeting creek side on the property of committee member Hunt Wiley.



Big Pine Dam stirred up controversy

-Article written by Terri Wargo (Warren County Historical Society) and reported in commercial-news.com
August 11, 2013

In October 1965, Congress authorized the Corps of Engineers to build an earth and rockfill dam on Big Pine Creek in Warren County, Indiana, at an estimated cost of \$28 million. The reservoir and lake would cover more than 1,000 acres. The reservoir was to help control flooding along the Wabash River, as well as, provide recreational benefits and economic growth to the surrounding area through tourism and increased residential land values.

This was not the first attempt to construct a dam along Big Pine Creek. The project had been given federal approval in 1937 subject to the Warren County commissioners purchasing the land to be covered by the lake.

The commissioners were prepared to go through with their part of the contract, but objected to some of the clauses in the agreement with the government. In June 1938, the local newspapers reported the proposed dam and lake below Mudlavia might become a reality. A committee of Williamsport and Attica businessmen met with Congresswoman Virginia Jenckes to hear her offer. The committee consisted of Homer Young, Dr. T.E. Ward, Judge John Hall, Dr. Hewitt, A.H. Warwick, Russell Robinson, L.L. Johnson, Louis Nathan, Max Newmark, Moe Nathan and Ura Seeger.

The committee then met with Warren County commissioners, who considered the advantages, as well as the burden placed on taxpayers. County attorney Cecil Haupt advised the board the county could not issue bonds to purchase land for the project unless there was a statute empowering them to do so. Needless to say, the project did not go through.

Support in 1965 came from business and political interests in the area, but drew criticism from state environmental groups. A poll conducted by the Williamsport Review-Republican showed residents opposed the project 10-to-one. Most viewed it as a waste of taxpayers' money.

The Big Pine Creek Dam debate launched the political career of 22-year-old Jim Jontz, who won the Indiana state representative seat by two votes. The Fall Creek Gorge Nature conservancy was created in 1973 in an effort to protect a portion of the area from destruction. This area included what was better known locally as the "Potholes." Forty-three acres were purchased with the help of a \$20,000 loan from a Purdue University janitor.

In 1975, the Army Corps of Engineers' Louisville district recommended that the Big Pine project be abandoned. They found the dam would significantly harm the wildlife and natural features in the area and the economic benefit did not justify the cost.

Those opposed to the project were still afraid the agency would wait until opposition died down and the political climate became favorable and then resurrect the project. Supporters continued to seek funding for the project, but in January 1990 the Corps officially de-authorized the project.

**The Big Pine Creek Watershed Group in collaboration with CCSI invite you to
the June 1st, 2018 Soil Health Field Day:**

“Building a Competitive Edge with Conservation”

Agronomic and Economic Considerations

Rick Clark, Clark Farms

Dan Desutter, Tippecanoe County Farmer

Ken Rulon, Hamilton County Farmer

Steve Wallpe, Benton County Farmer

Drainage and Nutrient Management

Barry Fisher, NRCS Regional Soil Health Specialist

Jason Weller, Senior Director of Sustainability, Land O Lakes

Research and Data Collection

Dr. Jason Ackerson, Assistant Professor of Agronomy, Purdue University

Supply Chain Advantage

Lexi Clark, Program Manager, Farm to Market

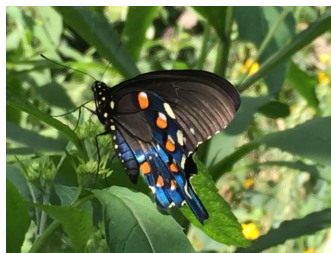
Karen Scanlon, Vice President, Innovation Center for US Dairy

Benton/Warren Dairy Group

Interested in more information? Contact the Benton County SWCD for full agenda and to reserve your FREE LUNCH!

Women's Learning Circle

Are you a woman landowner interested in learning more about prairie restoration, native plants, and pollinator habitat? Join us this summer for a workshop facilitated by women for women. If interested, contact the Benton County SWCD for more information.



Big Pine History Tour

Curious about the historical components associated with Big Pine Creek? Learn about the significance of the creek as part of Harrison's Trail, details of Mud Lavia, Native American History, and the natural landscapes.

Outreach Efforts

Do you know all about the Big Pine Creek Watershed Project? Do your family, neighbors, church congregation, and mailman know about the project? We're working hard to get the word out through articles, flyers, videos, interviews, ag retail partners, billboards and anything else we can come up with!

The financial assistance with the watershed focuses on landowner and farmer conservation practices, but there are opportunities for involvement with our volunteer and educational efforts. If you or someone you know wants to get involved, let us know! Contact the Benton County SWCD at (765) 884-0660.

Mission Statement:

“Voluntarily conserve and improve the natural environment while balancing interest of stakeholders in the Big Pine Creek Watershed.”

