

# Livingston County

## Soil & Water Conservation District

October—December 2014 Newsletter

<http://www.swcd.mo.gov/livingston>

### Cover Crops—Pilot Practice

A new practice is available to landowners in Livingston County. The Soil and Water Districts Commission approved a Cover Crops Pilot Practice for fiscal year 2015 for all Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The purpose of this practice is to provide landowners and operators an incentive to encourage the adoption of cover crops for reducing soil erosion and improving water quality and soil health. The Cover Crops Pilot Practice applies to no-till cropland acres where row crops are grown and a cover crop management system is not currently being implemented. The incentive payment is \$30/acre and during the pilot phase it can not be approved for more than 20 acres per landowner/operator. There are some requirements and guidelines

that must be met before approval. If you are interested in learning more about the Cover Crop Pilot Practice, contact our office. Funding is limited.



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**Experts talk soil health—Newsletter article #3**  
*Written and produced by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service*

**No-till, cover crops go hand-in-hand to build healthy soils, expert says**

Even after 30 years of no-till and cover crop experience, Dwayne Beck, manager of South Dakota State University's Dakota Lakes Research Farm near Pierre, South Dakota says there's still much to learn about mimicking nature. But he says the critical first step is to realize that the soil is living and part of a larger ecosystem.

"The diverse plants of the prairies cycled carbon back to the soil, and that slow, steady return of carbon to the soil boosted soil organic matter which continuously fed billions of microbes," Beck says. "Those microbes, in turn, broke down organic matter, making nutrients available to plants. This cycle produced the high levels of active organic matter in virgin prairie soils that accounted for the astounding yields sodbusters enjoyed in past generations."

"In tillage-based systems, mineralization is 'boom and bust.' Booms occur after tillage with busts following shortly after. In contrast, mineralization in no-till soils is more evenly spread over the season," Beck says.

Taken together with intensive rotation, no-till becomes a comprehensive program—there's no need to fall back on occasional tillage, Beck says. "And you don't want to till occasionally, because one year of tillage destroys that environment for microorganisms you've been building for years."

"Once you realize the soil is living, it makes sense that the living organisms in the soil need a balanced diet, just as your livestock [need a balanced diet]," Beck says. "You can't provide that diet with a continuous crop. That's where cover crops and crop rotations come in; they're needed to give that variety of food to the soil," he says.

For more information on how to "Unlock the Secrets in Your Soil," call or visit your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office or visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).

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[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)

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### State Cost-Share Assistance Sign-Up

The Livingston County SWCD is currently operating in FY2015 (fiscal year 2015) which runs July 1, 2014—June 30, 2015. Most of the funds for this year are spoken for as we use a continuous sign-up list to administer the state cost-share assistance we receive for the county. ***If you are interested in receiving cost-share assistance, please stop by the office (or you can send your operator) and get your name on our list.*** A landowner may only have his/her name on the list one time for each practice. After you receive cost-share for a practice, you may sign up again. We do not have a specific sign-up period—it is continuous throughout the year.

The sign-up for ponds is also continuous; however, they are evaluated on erosion, feasibility and purpose and then ranked accordingly. Then we develop an approved list from that ranking and work down that list.



Make sure your name is on the sign-up list for the practice that you are interested in!

#### REMINDER:

*If you have received notification from our office that you will be getting State Cost-Share, you must call the office as soon as your crops are harvested to get your name on the staking list. Survey and design work is done on a first come first serve basis.*

## 2015 Stewardship Theme Announced

The National Association of Conservation Districts has announced the 2015 Stewardship theme which will be used for our annual Poster Contest.



We can thank pollinators for one in three mouthfuls of food and drink – everything from coffee and chocolate to most fruits and many vegetables in our diet. Pollination is also critical for many of the animal products we consume, including dairy products, beef, pork and poultry. These animals consume insect-pollinated legumes such as alfalfa and clover at some time during their growth. When we start to think about what we ate yesterday for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, we start to understand the importance of pollinators in our own diets.

***Details about our Poster Contest will be released in January 2015.***

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## The NW Regional Envirothon Competition

The Envirothon is a problem-solving, natural resource education program for high school students. In the field, teams of students are challenged to hone critical thinking skills and work as a team. They answer written questions and conduct hands-on investigation of environmental issues in five categories - Soils/Land Use, Aquatic Ecology, Forestry, Wildlife, and Current Environmental Issues. In addition to a written test, the teams also present an oral presentation solving a specific natural resource issue. The top 3 scoring teams of each of the 7 Regions will advance to State Competition. The Envirothon stimulates, reinforces, and enhances students' interest in the environment and our state's natural resources.

**This year's Regional Envirothon will be held November 6 at the Hartell Conservation Area near Plattsburg.** The NW Regional area encompasses the following 17 counties: Atchison, Holt, Nodaway, Andrew, Buchanan, Worth, Gentry, DeKalb, Clinton, Harrison, Daviess, Caldwell, Ray, Mercer, Grundy, Livingston and Carroll. The Regional, State and National Envirothon events are sponsored in part by Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the nation.



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## Upcoming Events

### Holiday Closings

10/13/14 Columbus Day  
11/11/14 Veteran's Day  
11/27/14 Thanksgiving Day  
12/25/14 Christmas Day

### Events

11/6/14 NW Regional Envirothon  
12/10/14-12/12/14 Soil & Water  
Training Conference



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Questions or Comments?

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