

# HORIZONS

VOLUME 39, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2014

## COVER CROP WORKSHOP



When: April 1, 2014  
Time: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (lunch provided)  
(optional field tour after lunch)  
Where: Durand State Bank Community Room  
1005 Cameron Drive  
Durand, IL

### **PLEASE R.S.V.P.**

to the Winnebago County Soil & Water Conservation District - (815) 965-2392, x3  
(Dennis Anthony) or AgTech - (815) 541-6720 (Trevor Olson) by 3-25-14.

- Learn how cover crops can increase your soil fertility and the health of your soil.
- Learn about different species of cover crops and where to place them.
- Learn how to incorporate cover crops into your forage system.
- Learn about the benefits of plant health in your cropping and forage systems.
- Learn from one of the Midwest's most renowned Cover Crop Specialists Dave Robison.



Dave Robison

- Founding member of the Midwest Cover Crop Council
- Co-founder of the National Cool Season Grass Initiative
- Founder of Plantcovercrops.com
- Works extensively with University researchers at their testing sites
- Speaks across the county on the value of cover crops



### Sponsored By:



Winnebago County  
Soil & Water  
Conservation District



*Conserving Our Land Today For Tomorrow*

The Winnebago County Soil & Water Conservation District is a locally operated unit of government functioning under Illinois Law.  
Our purpose is to promote the protection, maintenance, improvement, and wise use of the soil, water, and related resources within the District.  
Est. 1940

## **What is a Soil & Water Conservation District?**



Soil & water Conservation Districts (SWCD), established in 1937 under the Illinois Soil and Water Conservation District Act, are local units of government. The Act gives SWCD'S the responsibility to provide technical information to individuals and groups on methods of soil and water conservation, and to provide natural resource inventory information on properties slated for zoning changes. The Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation was formed in 1940 and is a locally operated unit of government functioning under Illinois Law. Our purpose is to promote the protection, maintenance, improvement, and wise use of the soil, water, and related resources within the District.

### **Who develops the policies of the Winnebago County SWCD?**

The Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District is a public body made up of citizens concerned with the protection of our natural resources. It is governed by a five-member board of directors elected by District landowners and residents. This board of directors, along with the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) develop annual and long range plans that direct the activities of the District and NRCS.

### **Who funds the SWCD?**

Districts have no taxing authority. Funding is provided by the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA). Districts offer several programs which supplement IDOA funding. The additional funding is utilized for operation expenses and education programs.

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## **NOW AVAILABLE**

Constructed by the Rock Valley College - Students for Responsible Environmental Sustainability (SRES) Club.

For sale at the District office to support the SRES Club.

*SRES Club's purpose is to promote awareness of sustainable energy opportunities and explore various activities related to the sustainable energy community.*



**\$10**



**\$5**

# SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE

The Directors of the Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) are taking applications for a scholarship of up to **\$750.00 (\$500 minimum)**. This will be awarded to a Winnebago County youth who is or has graduated from a Winnebago County school, or someone currently enrolled in an accredited college or university, to further his or her education in an agricultural or natural resource field. This includes fields such as Agribusiness, Ag-Economics, Agronomy, Natural Resources, Soil and Crop Science, Forestry, Aquaculture, Wildlife Management, Ag-Science, etc.

To obtain an application, go to our website at [www.winnebagoswcd.org](http://www.winnebagoswcd.org) or contact the office at (815) 965-2392, ext. 3. Please type or print legibly in black or blue ink. All completed forms must be received by March 28<sup>th</sup> at the district office: Winnebago County SWCD, 4833 Owen Center Road, Rockford, IL 61101. Any applications submitted after this date will be disqualified.

*Congratulations!*

## 2013 Recipients



Elena Johannsen is a junior at Dension University where she is studying Biology, with an emphasis on ecology. She hopes to work in marine and freshwater conservation. Last summer she studied and did research at the Duke University Marine Lab in Beaufort, NC. Currently she is studying at the Marine Ecology and Conservation Research Station in Bonaire. Elena grew up exploring the natural areas and forest preserves of Winnebago County.

Nikole Steffenhagen graduated from Winnebago High School. She is currently finishing up her second year at Highland Community College in Freeport, IL. After Highland, she will be attending UW-Platteville to major in Animal Science with a dairy emphasis. Nikole stays busy by milking cows and preparing for the agriculture industry after college. She also enjoys showing dairy cows during her time off in the summer.





# Winnebago County SWCD 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon



The **Winnebago County SWCD** held their **73<sup>rd</sup>** Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon on Friday, January 31<sup>st</sup> at Klehm Arboretum. About 95 people attended the event. It included a short business meeting, and the election of three directors. Elected to two year terms were Paul Beuth, Roger Christin and Justin Krohn. Several Individuals and organizations were recognized for their outstanding efforts in the areas of Environmental Education, Environmental Awareness, and Dedication to Water Quality Protection. An Outstanding Conservation Farmer was recognized, and an individual was honored for his Distinguished Merit.



The District held a silent auction to benefit our educational efforts. Over 40 businesses, organizations and individuals donated items such as gift cards, prints, baked goods, and other items. **\$2,960** was raised in the auction, which will go into our Education Fund, which is used for our scholarship program and other educational events.



A huge thank-you goes out to all of the auction donors, with a special thank-you to Wyffels Hybrids, for their generous donation. We also want to acknowledge **Judy Barnard**, one of our Associate Directors, for helping organize the auction.



SWCD Vice Chairman, Paul Beuth & Roger Christian

**Roger Christin** was given the District's "**Distinguished Merit**" Award. Roger recently retired from the Winnebago/Boone Farm Bureau in December of 2012, where he served as the Farm Bureau manager for 20 years. Roger has always been supportive of the educational activities and conservation efforts of the District and those of our partners, and continues to be actively involved.

The District held a rain barrel design contest last fall. The winning design came from 4<sup>th</sup> grade student **Analese Vondrak**, from **St. Bridget's School**. A live auction of the rain barrel was conducted by **Jim Sacia**, with the proceeds from the auction going towards the school's garden and food pantry. This was definitely one of the highlights of the meeting, as the bidding reached **\$1,000** for the barrel! It was purchased by **Dwayne Proctor** (with **Tessa Chadwick** as a silent partner). They, in turn, donated the barrel back to the school.



**Rock Valley College “Students for Responsible Environmental Sustainability” Club** was selected to receive our **“Environmental Awareness” Award**. This club was formed in 2012 by a group of students in Dr. Joey Holmes Environmental Science Class. The students realized the need to make a change in people’s mind sets and in their practices, in order to make our world a better place. They felt a strong need to take action so they formed the club to start making a difference. They volunteer to do prairie seed collection, make bird houses and bird feeders for local parks, and promote environmental sustainability at their campus. They currently have about 30 active members studying a variety of subjects. This award was sponsored by the Four Rivers Environmental Coalition. Pictured are Club President Abigail Simon and Vice President Will Freiburger.



Our **“Outstanding Conservation Farmer Award”** was presented to **Bernie Walsh**. Bernie farms approximately 1,100 acres in the Durand area, where he has farmed his whole life. Most of his land is enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program, which is a voluntary program that encourages producers to address resource concerns by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing the conservation activities on their land. Bernie also has his most environmentally sensitive lands enrolled in various practices in the Conservation Reserve Program, which is geared towards water quality protection and wildlife habitat. Pictured is **Bernie Walsh**, and award sponsor **Greg Smith** from **Durand State Bank**.

**Brenden Schultz** was awarded the **“Environmental Education” Award**. Brenden has been with the Pecatonica High School for 10 years, where he teaches the Agricultural, Horticulture & Environmental Science classes. He is also the adviser to the Durand-Pecatonica-Winnebago FFA chapter. Brenden likes to incorporate many hands-on activities for his students, such as field plots and classroom activities at the Torstenson Family Conservation Education Center; as well as the construction of the pavilion, and FFA orchard and garden adjacent to the High School. Pictured is award sponsor **Jeff Sterling** from **German American State Bank**, with **Brenden Schultz**.



**Stenstrom** was awarded our **“Dedication to Water Quality Protection” Award**. They received the award because of their commitment to protection our water quality resources, and setting an example for others in the County. They understand their responsibility for controlling non-point source pollution on construction sites, and try to prevent any negative impacts to the environment by using sound planning and implementation of soil erosion and sediment control practices. Pictured is award sponsor **Bill Brenner** from **Riverside Community Bank**, and Stenstrom Representative **Jim Frykman**.



# Thank You

to the following businesses for sponsoring the Annual Meeting on  
**Friday, January 31, 2014**

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## **WINNEBAGO COUNTY SWCD & USDA-NRCS OPEN FULL TIME**

This is just a reminder that the Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the USDA - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office is still open 5 days a week, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and will remain so at our current location.

Last April, the USDA - Farm Service Agency (FSA) reduced its presence in Winnebago County to only one day a week, on Wednesdays. If you are trying to reach the Winnebago County FSA any week-day besides Wednesday, you may call the Stephenson County FSA office at (815) 235-2141, ext. 2.

Customers wishing to have 100% access to FSA records on a full time basis have the opportunity to transfer their farms to an adjacent fully operational county FSA Service Center. However, the Winnebago County SWCD would encourage you to maintain your records in Winnebago County. NORMAL program sign-up activities can occur at either office, even if your physical records are maintained in Winnebago County. Calling ahead for appointments is encouraged, and may be required during peak sign-up periods. There has been NO official deadline set for producers to transfer their records, and NO official deadline has been set for permanent office consolidation or closure.

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### **HIGHLY ERODIBLE LAND AND WETLAND COMPLIANCE**

High grain prices have caused many operators to break out new land, clear trees, and other activities to bring land into crop production, including what was Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage. Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive benefits from USDA, they must be compliant with Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions.

Producers should notify FSA prior to conducting land clearing or drainage projects to ensure compliance. Something as simple as clearing a fence row, or converting a pasture into cropland, could result in losing USDA benefits. In addition, producers and landowners should contact FSA before modifying, tiling, draining, dredging, filling or leveling any wetland or drainage ditches.

Landowners and operators can complete form AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for a technical determination is necessary. For more information on Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions, contact your FSA County Office or visit the FSA website at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

# 2013 TRANSECT SURVEY RESULTS

This last spring, staff from the Winnebago County SWCD conducted our semi-annual transect survey, to see what type of tillage trends are going on, and resulting soil loss predictions. This is done not only to monitor local trends but also statewide trends. Locally, it appears that corn acres are shifting away from high residue tillage operations to more conventional tillage, especially when you compare 2013 data to 2006 data. I'm sure there are many factors on why no-till acres have reduced, such as reduced soybean acres as producers switch to more continuous corn acres. The alarming number is the amount of corn farmed under a conventional system, or systems with less than 15% residue. This would have to result in aggressive tillage on corn following corn, or significant tillage on corn following soybeans. There are many areas in the County where soil types and/or slopes allow for conventional tillage, but the main concern is the sloping ground. Hopefully, those who feel the need to aggressive tillage on corn stalks, or tillage on soybean ground, look into some of the newer equipment out there, such as the vertical tillage tools, that leave a majority of the residue on the soil surface, while still providing some soil disturbance that they are looking for in seed bed preparations.

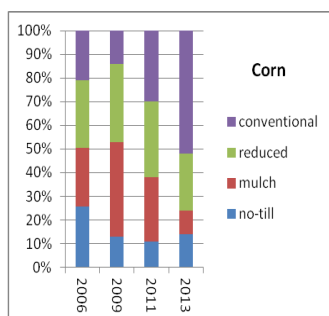
Soybeans, on the other hand have stayed consistent, with no-till being the planting method of choice. Wheat acres were also evaluated, with a majority of them planted with minimal or no tillage.

As we all know, tillage types and residue levels remaining all equate to predicted erosion levels. Soils have a "tolerable" soil loss level, or "T" value, typically 5 tons per acre per year. The goal of this program when it started in the early 1990s was to achieve "T" by 2000 throughout the state. That challenge proved to be too tough to accomplish. The table below shows that in fact, trends are changing, with the % of cropland farmed at a tolerable soil loss level reducing from 93% in 2006 to 88.5% last year. This most likely corresponds with the reduce residue levels in corn fields. Hopefully this is a trend that we can reverse!!

There are a few disclaimers to this information. For instance, this survey is conducted in early June, after crops are planted, so it does not ascertain whether tillage is done in the fall or spring. The use of cover crops is also not factored in to the cropping system information, which can greatly impact erosion potential.

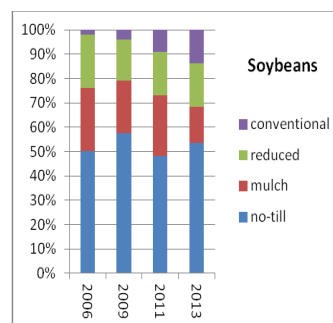
**Corn – 431 Points surveyed**

Tillage Type	2006	2009	2011	2013
No-Till	26%	13%	11%	14%
Mulch Till	25%	40%	27%	10%
Reduced Till	29%	33%	32%	24%
Conventional	21%	14%	30%	52%



**Soybeans – 199 points surveyed**

Tillage Type	2006	2009	2011	2013
No-Till	50%	58%	48%	54%
Mulch Till	26%	22%	25%	15%
Reduced Till	22%	17%	18%	18%
Conventional	2%	4%	9%	14%



No-Till – Corn	>40% following soybeans
Soybeans	>80% following corn
Mulch Till	30-50% residue remaining
Reduced Tillage	15-30% residue remaining
Conventional Tillage	<15% residue remaining

**Erosion Levels – Meeting T**

T Level	2006	2009	2011	2013
Below T	93%	91%	90%	88.5%
1-2 T	6%	7%	8%	9%
> 2T	1%	2%	2%	2.5%



## Mark Your Calendars



- March 21 - Tree Sale Deadline
- March 25 - SWCD Board Meeting
- March 28 - Scholarship Deadline
- April 1 - Cover Crop Field Day
- April 8 & 10 - N.E. IL Envirothon Competition
- April 10-12 - Illinois Lakes Management Association Conference - [www.ilma-lakes.org](http://www.ilma-lakes.org)
- April 12 - Earth Day at Rock Valley College
- April 22 - Earth Day
- April 25 - Arbor Day
- April 29 - SWCD Board Meeting
- May 3 - Spring Metals Drive - [www.knib.org](http://www.knib.org)

**TO BECOME A 2015  
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**Visit the District website for information on programs and news.**

**[www.winnebago-swcd.org](http://www.winnebago-swcd.org)**

## Rain Barrels for Sale



Stop letting your stormwater wash away and start putting it to use with a rain barrel. These barrels come fully assembled with a screen mesh lid, two overflow valves and a bottom drain plug. These barrels have previously been used to ship pickled food overseas. These barrels make excellent gifts! Available colors include: **terra cotta, grey, blue and black**. The barrels are \$70.00 each if just one is purchased or \$65.00 if two or more are purchased.

Call the SWCD Office at (815) 965-2392 ext. 3 for color and barrel availability and to place an order.

# **“HORIZONS” SPONSORS – 2014**

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## **“Time for Your Water Well Checkup”**



### **National Groundwater Awareness Week March 9-15, 2014**

The National Ground Water Association recommends routine annual well maintenance checks to help ensure water quality and proper operation of the well. NGWA also recommends your well water be tested annually or anytime there is a change in taste, odor, or appearance, or anytime the system is serviced.

**national  
groundwater  
awareness week**

To learn more, visit [www.WellOwner.org](http://www.WellOwner.org) or call NGWA customer service at 800 551.7379 (614 898.7791).



# TIME TO SCHEDULE YOUR ANNUAL WATER WELL CHECKUP!

Just as you check your furnace or smoke detector batteries seasonally, spring is a good season to have an annual water well checkup before the peak water use season begins, according to the National Ground Water Association (NGWA).

## Why is it a good idea to have my water well checked annually?

An annual checkup by a qualified water well contractor is the best way to ensure problem-free service and quality water.

Also, preventative maintenance usually is less costly than emergency maintenance, and good well maintenance, like good car maintenance, can prolong the life of your well and related equipment.



The Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District further recommends you test your water whenever there is a change in taste, odor, or appearance, or when the system is serviced. Private water users should test at least yearly for bacteria and other contaminants. Even if your water is safe, yearly testing will enable you to have a record of your water's prior history, so that if a change occurs, you will know. In addition, should anyone damage your water supply, you will have proof of your water quality prior to the damage. Water sampling is done by the Winnebago County Health Department. Water sampling kits can be picked up at several outreach sites throughout the County, one of which being the SWCD Office. Water samples must be dropped off at outreach sites by 11:00 AM on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month or at the Winnebago County Health Department (WCHD) Monday through Wednesday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., or Thursday from 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Water samples are not accepted by the WCHD on Fridays.



## Schedule your annual water well checkup.

(815) 720-4101

Wells can provide high-quality drinking water, and about half the U.S. population receives its drinking water from wells. But with well ownership comes the responsibility of keeping the water well in good working order. A check of your well by a qualified water well contractor may include:

- ◆ A flow test to determine system output, along with a check of the water level before and during pumping (if possible), pump motor performance (check amp load, grounding and line voltage), pressure tank and switch contact and general water quality (odor, cloudiness, etc.)
- ◆ A well equipment inspection to assure it's sanitary and meets local code.
- ◆ A test of your water for coliform bacteria and nitrates and anything else of local concern. Other typical additional test are those for iron, manganese, water hardness, sulfides and other water constituents that cause problems with plumbing, staining, water appearance and odor.

## The SWCD also recommends that well owners:

- ◆ Keep hazardous chemicals such as paint, fertilizer, pesticides and motor oil far from your well and maintain a "clean" zone of at least 50 feet between your well and any kennels and livestock operations.
- ◆ Main proper separation between your well and buildings, waste systems and chemical storage areas.
- ◆ Periodically check the well cover or well cap on top of the casing (well) to ensure it is in good repair and securely attached. Its seal should keep out insects and rodents.
- ◆ Keep your well records in a safe place. These include the construction report, annual water well system maintenance and water testing results.

## For more information go to:

<http://wellowner.org/>

<http://www.ngwa.org/Pages/default.aspx>

# RAIN, THAWING SNOW ON FROZEN SOIL CAN CAUSE RILL EROSION

Source: Penn State Extension  
By Sjoerd Duiker



Jan. 13, 2014 - Rill and gully erosion is the detachment and transport of soil by concentrated flow of water. Rills are small enough to be removed by normal tillage operations. Once they become deeper than about a foot, and too big to drive across with a tractor, they become gullies.

Reports are coming in of rill erosion on fields with little crop residue - especially in soybean stubble or bare corn silage ground. The problem is increased if the subsoil is frozen but the surface starts to thaw because the water cannot infiltrate. The surface soil turns into a liquid, and soon after water starts to puddle, runoff is the inevitable result.

If the soil is bare and unprotected rill erosion can become a serious problem, especially if slopes are long. This is especially worrisome in long-term no-till fields where these concentrated flow paths will grow over time and turn into gullies. This is why it is so important to manage your soil so that the chance of rill erosion in the winter is reduced.

## Key points are:

- ✓ Leave soil completely covered. This means no residue should be removed in the fall, or a cover crop should be planted early enough to provide full cover going into the winter to protect soil against rill erosion throughout the cold winter months and early spring.
- ✓ Employ living root systems to hold soil in place. Cover crop or economical small grain crop roots are especially effective in keeping soil in place. It is highly preferred to use no-till methods to establish these crops in the fall to avoid loosening the soil and reducing its residue cover over the winter. Make sure the cover crops are established early enough to provide 80% soil cover and a root system that will hold soil in place.
- ✓ Leave soil very rough and covered with residue until shortly before planting if you do use tillage in your system. Chisel plowing with straight shanks and leaving the soil very rough helps create many pockets that hold water, giving it more time to infiltrate before running off. This practice may have limited applicability on slopes steeper than 8% due to increased risk of break-through that now creates deep incisions in the field.
- ✓ Plant on the contour. Runoff is slowed down by the closely spaced plants in the row. On the other hand, runoff often flows between the rows if they are planted up-and-down the slope.
- ✓ Drain perennial wet spots. Drainage helps soil stay aerated so that cover crops can grow there. It is not uncommon to see cover crops die in wet spots which then become sediment sources later on. Check with USDA-NRCS that the area is not designated as a wetland or you may lose farm payments.
- ✓ Plant grassed waterways in areas of concentrated flow. This may be the solution where concentrated flow customarily occurs, for example where seeps exit the soil on hillsides, or newer a road which dumps runoff into a field. A grassed waterway is a natural or constructed vegetated channel that is shaped and graded to carry surface water at a sub-erosive velocity to a stable

Soil erosion is still our No. 1 enemy in agriculture - it causes soil productivity to decline and pollutes our surface waters. Keeping soil in place should be first on every producer's mind but it involves planning and preparation because once runoff starts it is too late and one is left with only remediation as an option.

# Order Trees - Deadline, March 21

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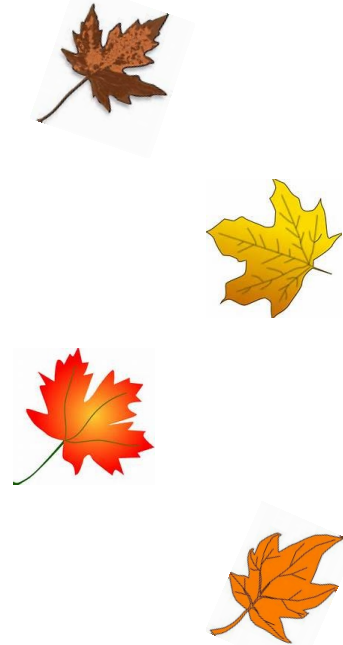
WINNEBAGO COUNTY SWCD

## TREE SALE

Shrubs (seedlings, 12-18")  
Evergreens (3-4 yr. transplants - 10-24")  
Shade trees (seedlings, 18-24")

Sold in bundle sizes of 5, 25 or 100  
price range from \$10-\$140

ORDER EARLY  
SUPPLIES ARE LIMITED



**call or go to website for order form**  
**(815) 965-2392, x3**  
**[www.winnebago-swcd.org](http://www.winnebago-swcd.org)**

An amendment to the Soil & Water Conservation Districts Act (Section 22.05) requires the following statement:  
"These plants are for conservation purposes only and shall not be used as ornamentals or for landscaping."



## The right prescription for a healthier lawn or garden

The Soil Doctor - Lawn & Garden Soil Diagnosis kits are now available at the SWCD office.

You take the sample **AFTER** you pick up the kit. Follow the sampling instructions included in the kit and send it into The Soil Doctor for a laboratory soil analysis.

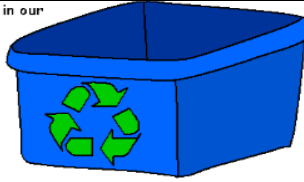


# KIDS CORNER

Unscramble the letters to find the words in our

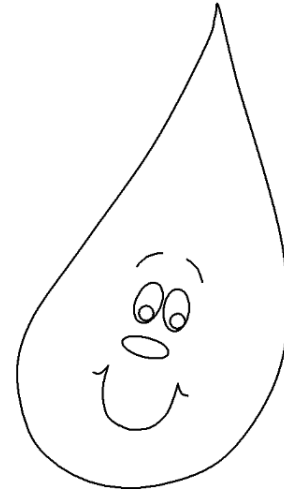
## Earth Day Anagram

Hidden Word (circled letters):



eed u r c \_\_\_\_\_  
 e s u er \_\_\_\_\_  
 b a t i h a t \_\_\_\_\_  
 l a i m a n \_\_\_\_\_  
 e n e r g \_\_\_\_\_  
 a n c l e \_\_\_\_\_  
 g o e y o l c \_\_\_\_\_  
 e y e c c r l \_\_\_\_\_  
 h e a r t \_\_\_\_\_  
v e e s r n o c \_\_\_\_\_  
 l a p n t \_\_\_\_\_

Word List: animal, clean, conserve,  
earth, ecology, green, habitat,  
plant, recycle, reduce, reuse

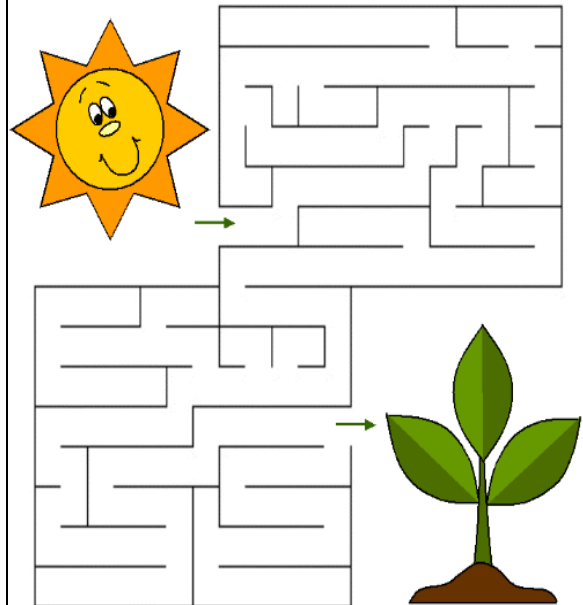


SAVE OUR PLANET!



## Earth Day Maze

Help the sunshine make the sprout grow.



## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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John Carlson  
Roger Christin  
Justin Krohn  
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Harlan Tipton  
Dorie Zimmerman

Monthly Board Meetings are held at the Soil & Water Conservation District Office on the last Tuesday of the month.

Meetings are open to the public, and interested citizens are encouraged to attend.

## **SWCD STAFF**

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All Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Natural Resource Conservation Service programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap. The Winnebago County SWCD operates in accordance with the USDA policy. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against should write to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington D.C. 20250.

**WINNEBAGO COUNTY SWCD**

4833 Owen Center Road  
Rockford, IL 61101-6007



Phone: (815) 965-2392, Ext. 3

Follow us   [winnebagoswcd.org](http://winnebagoswcd.org)

*Office Hours*  
*Monday - Friday*  
*8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.*