

CONSERVATION IN ACTION

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2

Share Your News

At its core, Shawnee RC&D is an organization that focuses on building partnerships and relationships with other agencies and communities.

Toward this end, we want to help other groups and areas publicize their events and project accomplishments.

If you have an upcoming event or fundraiser, or information related to conservation or environmental work being done in the RC&D area, then let us know so we can include it in future issues of Conservation In Action and our agency calendar.

The strongest asset any organization can have, is a good network, and we want to help build that network for others. So send us your news! Events and stories can be sent to info@shawneercd.org



Shawnee
Resource Conservation
& Development

SAVE THE DATE!

2014 Sustainable Living Expo

Hosted this year on October 25, 2014, the Sustainable Living Expo is a daylong event featuring workshops, activities, and presentations by specialists from the community who generously donate their time to inform the public on a variety of topics related to small scale agriculture, local foods, renewable resources, alternative energy, and emergency preparedness. Hosted at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center, in Simpson IL, this event is free to the public. The children's area, with games and activities, makes the Expo a fun day for the whole family. We hope to see you there! For more information call (618) 944-1736 or check out the webpage at slexpo.org

Upcoming Regional Events

June

28—Invasive Plant Species Workshop (Cache River Wetlands Area Center)

July

10—Middle Mississippi River Partnership Annual Meeting (Alton, IL)

[19—Green Earth Work Day](#)

29—River to River CWMA Partners Meeting

Upcoming & Ongoing

[Wildflower Walks](#)

May 11th—October 12th
Throughout Southern Illinois

[Ecocamp](#)

May—June
Touch of Nature

[Urban Fishing Program](#)

June 16—August 8
SIUC—Campus Lake

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: FIRE RESOURCES

Our Partners Say “Thanks” For a Job Well Done

Each year, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and its partnering agencies burn off hazardous underbrush and other fuel sources, to control the threat of future fires and invasive species and provide more manageable spaces for humans and animals alike.

As part of a partnership with IDNR Shawnee RC&D assists in this important work by providing online education, centralized contact, payroll management and report preparation.

These letters from our partners show how important the RC&D is to accomplish project goals, and we are so happy to share them first hand.

Hi,

I just wanted send you a quick note of appreciation for the assistance you and the Shawnee RC&D have been providing through the Fire Resources State Wildlife Grant. Having extra labor through this grant has become critical for accomplishing IDNR objectives for prescribed burning in the region. And at least from my perspective it seems like administration and reporting went very smoothly this year.

In particular I don't know how we could have prepared the firebreaks and completed the 700 + acres of prescribed burning at Trail of Tears State Forest last fall and this spring without this program. These were difficult burn units that required a lot of people coming together to accomplish. Thanks again for your assistance and I hope we can find a way to keep this program in place for years to come.

David Allen, IDNR

Hello,

[I] Just wanted to let you good folks at Shawnee RC&D know how very helpful the Fire Resources Grant has been for me down here in Natural Heritage, District 26, and indeed all the field staff in Region 5.

Prescribed fire is perhaps the most valuable management tool (many would say essential), utilized by resource professionals responsible for restoring and sustaining the health of our upland forests, woodlands, barrens and glades. But prescribed burning is a labor intensive practice, requiring the ready availability of dedicated personnel, often on very short notice.

Your willingness to administer this grant has greatly expanded our ability to better manage large tracts of forested land. The benefits have been tremendous - a wonderful example of how different agencies and organizations can work together to make good things happen on the landscape.

Thank you so very much!

Mark.Guetersloh

Dear RC&D

I just wanted to drop you a note thanking you for your fire resource folks—that program made our season. Burning this year without their help, our season would be half of what it was. I burn with the SIPBA and multiple IDNR agencies, If there is anyway possible please continue this program. I had no idea about how easy it was to use this program until this year. Thanks again.

Chris Walker, Certified Burn Manager

ABOUT THE RC&D

Our History

The Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Program was established as part of the Food and Agricultural Act of 1962 with the goal of assisting regional multi-county areas in conservation, water quality, wildlife habitat, and rural development. Work in each area was coordinated by a council, which operated as a sponsorship-based nonprofit led by local leaders and volunteers.

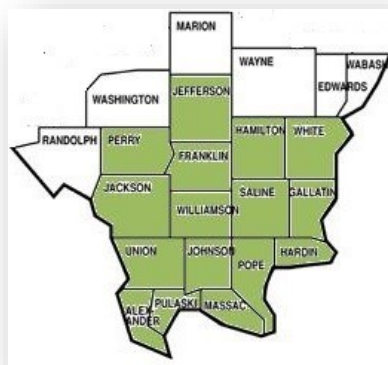
The Shawnee RC&D area was established to provide conservation efforts in the lower 16 counties of Illinois. Responsibility for the administration of this nation-wide program resided within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, which provided basic operating support for the Council including administrative staff and overhead expenses, until 2011 when federal funding for the RC&D Program was eliminated.

Today

Following the loss of federal funding, the Shawnee RC&D Council reached out to its partners and supporters to create grant-funded agreements to continue work in the RC&D area (*right*).

By reducing over-head costs, and maximizing existing company assets, Shawnee RC&D has continued to grow and thrive, at a time when many RC&D Councils have had to close entirely.

Fundraising is currently underway to create a reimbursement reserve fund, which will allow Shawnee RC&D to increase the number of grant-funded projects underway. In order to meet up-front, reimbursable, costs, the Council has set a goal of raising \$50,000 by December 2015.



Our Focus

Shawnee RC&D sponsors and promotes projects and programs that improve the quality of life and sustainable use of natural resources in the lower 16 counties of Illinois. We provide experienced leadership, technical resources, and fiscal sponsorship to partners and community organizations who share our goals.

Our projects and programs focus on enhancing agriculture, natural resources, industry & culture, outdoor recreation, environmental education, and regional economic development.

Upcoming Meetings

All meetings are held at the USDA Office, in Marion IL, unless otherwise noted.

Sep 23rd, 6p—Full Council Meeting

Want to Get Involved?

Shawnee RC&D is looking for dedicated professionals and enthusiastic community members to join our Council. Meetings are held four times per year in Marion, IL. Council members are responsible for helping find new projects or conservation opportunities, networking with community and government leaders to accomplish conservation goals, representing Shawnee RC&D to the general public and informing others about the work we do. For more information about joining our council, or to submit a project or grant idea, please contact: Tabitha Ayres, Executive Director, (618) 944-1736, or email info@shawneercd.org.

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS ISAM AWARDS:

Regional Awards Recognize Individual Excellence in Invasive Species Control

By Karla Gage, River to River CWMA

On Friday, May 9th, 2014, as the kick-off to the 2014 Cache River Nature Fest, and to celebrate the Governor's proclamation of May as "Invasive Species Awareness Month", a Regional Awards Ceremony was hosted by Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc. (RC&D) and the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA), in order to recognize 15 individuals highly dedicated to invasive plant species control work in Southern Illinois.

These individuals were made up of conservation professionals, dedicated community leaders, and experienced volunteers. Each of the honorees recognize that one of the biggest challenges facing conservation today is the widespread problem of non-native invasive species, which destroy habitat for native plants and animals. The award recipients have all taken their knowledge of invasive species one step further, acting with responsibility to create a positive impact on the diversity of habitats in Southern Illinois. Several CWMA partnering organizations and Steering Committee members were present to support the recipients and their work. The RC&D, CWMA, and all contributing partners truly appreciate the efforts and successes of these individuals to further our regional invasive species control efforts.

2014 Regional Invasive Species Award Recipients



Pictured from left to right: (back) Gary Swisher—Landowner, Bruce Henry—SIUC Fire Dawgs, Sonja Lallemand—Volunteer Master Naturalist, Dr. Andrew West—Volunteer, Tharran Hobson—The Nature Conservancy, Caleb Grantham—The Nature Conservancy, Chris Long—Green Earth Volunteer, Ryan Pankau—NRCS, Richard Blume-Weaver—US Forest Service, (front) Mike Long—Green Earth Volunteer, Kathy Renfro—Carbondale Park District, Chris Midden—Unity Point School. Not pictured: Sharon Swisher—Landowner, Bob Lindsay—IDNR, Nick Seaton—The Nature Conservancy, and State Representative Brandon Phelps.

**The River to River
Cooperative Weed
Management Area is a
partnership between:**

Illinois Department of Natural
Resources · Illinois
Department of Agriculture ·
Illinois Department of
Transportation · USDA
Natural Resources
Conservation Service · USDA
Animal and Plant Health
Inspection Service · USDA
Forest Service Shawnee
National Forest · Crab
Orchard National Wildlife
Refuge · Cypress Creek
National Wildlife Refuge ·
Middle Mississippi River
National Wildlife Refuge ·
The Nature Conservancy ·
Shawnee Resource
Conservation & Development
Area, Inc. · University of
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Carbondale