

The Flow



More Cost-Share Funds Available

We have recently received word from IDEM Division of Water Quality that the 14 Mile Creek/Goose Creek Watershed Improvement Project has been granted additional funds to assist with cost-share practices that will address water quality issues in the watershed. Roughly, an additional \$125,000 in cost-share assistance will be available to landowners for these practices. However, these funds must be expended in 2021. Prior to receiving this news, the watershed improvement project had committed all the cost-share assistance funds previously provided in the original grant. This will make it possible to assist more landowners who want to improve their farm's productivity while making a statement about their concern for environmental improvement. It's easy to see if your project will qualify for cost-share assistance, just complete an application (that can be obtained from the Clark County SWCD Office or from the Watershed's web site 14milecreekwatershed.weebly.com) and submitted it with accompanying documents about your farm to the Watershed Coordinator (9608 Hwy. 62, Charlestown, IN 47111; david.trotter@in.nacdnet.net; 812-256-2330 ext. 3465).

Forage Forum Fridays

The Indiana Forage Council and Purdue Extension are sponsoring a series of virtual programs focusing on a wide variety of forage topics every Friday at noon (EST) beginning on March 5 and running through April 16. These will be free to everyone however, you have to register in advance of each session to get the viewing and participation link. To register, go to: <https://bit.ly/2LIPnZK>

Weekly topics have been determined and are as follows:

- March 5 – Soils
- March 12 – Forage Species Selection
- March 19 – Pasture Development & Renovations
- March 26 – Making Quality Dry Hay
- April 2 – Making Quality Haylage/Baleage
- April 9 – Properly Manage Pastures
- April 16 – Rotational Grazing



Clark County Soil & Water Conservation District

Partners helping to make our project happen:

- > Clark/Jefferson/Scott County Health Departments
- > Jefferson and Scott County SWCDs
- > IDNR Division of Nature Preserves
- > Indiana State Department of Agriculture
- > Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Be Septic Smart!

Your Septic Drain Field

The drain field is one of the most critical components of your home's septic system. Basically, if the drain field isn't happy and well maintained, the entire system won't function efficiently and effectively.

Clogs in your home's drain system can occur at a number of different locations. An poorly functioning drain field can cause home waste back-ups all the way to the kitchen sink. Fortunately, there are some clear signs to help you know if your drain field is blocked. Once you spot some or all of these signs, be sure to jump into action to prevent those unruly and odorous backups and overflows. Here are those early signs:

- The patch of grass over the drain lines are greener than other parts of the lawn
- Your plumbing starts to back up and won't flow freely
- You notice smells over the yard
- The ground over the drain field is mushy and wet compared to other parts of the yard

Once these issues start to show up, you need to give your septic drain field your full attention to prevent full blown chaos.



Septic Systems and Drain Cleaners

It's common knowledge to most folks that certain chemicals shouldn't be used to clean drains emptying into septic tanks. But, telling which is which might be a bit confusing. Clogs anywhere in your septic system can cause it to drain slowly, resulting in pools of water around your yard and even some really bad odors indoors as well as around your septic tank. Clogs are a common issue of drain lines. Their presence can cause water back-ups and complete system disruptions that result in real messes inside and outside the home.

Whenever there is a stopped-up drain in the home, a first response might be to grab a chemical drain cleaner. But, not all drain cleaners are safe for your septic tank. Some drain cleaners might even worsen the problem over time. Drain cleaners that are safe for your septic tank are the enzymatic ones. They are organic and natural products that won't damage your plumbing or septic tank. They also won't be harmful to the organisms we really on in the tank that make septic systems actually work.

Enzymatic drain cleaners might not work as fast as their chemical counterparts, but they do work and they won't cause any damage to you or your plumbing. Enzyme drain cleaners are the safest types you can use for your septic tank as well.



What's Your Spring Grazing Plan?

When should you start grazing pastures in the spring? Although it sounds pretty straightforward, that's kind of a complicated question with a lot of variables that need to be taken into consideration, so from my perspective, it gets you the answer "It depends".

Things that affect when spring grazing should include the amount of new plant growth present, soil moisture, rotational vs. continuous grazing, weather patterns, and plant species present, just to name a few. It is important to remember that one of the main goals of grazing any class of livestock is to use as much of the forage present as possible to meet the animals' nutritional needs yet still allow the forage plants to grow and flourish (stand survival). That goal is also the reason why many producers have embraced rotational grazing.

When making decisions about early spring grazing, it's important to match forage growth rate with early season animal consumption. Excessively early turn-out can be detrimental to forage growth but, waiting too long before letting animals into pastures can reduce forage productivity, nutritional value and utilization rate.

Spring is the most important time of the year to manage forage growth. What makes this time of year so important? The simple answer is because of all the critical management practices that must be accomplished at this time if grazing success is to be achieved. These practices include checking paddocks to see what's there and then repeat this practice every 10 days through the summer (pasture walks), seedings any thin spots you find, and possibly harvesting some paddocks for first cutting hay or baleage to keep forage plants vegetative.

Here's some general suggestions for starting spring grazing:

- In paddocks with the most dead fall growth still on them and new spring growth at about 2", use about 1/3 of the grazing area in the first week.
- In those same paddocks, use the second 1/3 when there is about 2"- 3" of new growth present in the second week.
- Finally, the paddocks that were fairly bare over the winter can be grazed when they have about 6" of new spring growth.
- After that, the first paddocks grazed should be ready for their second round of grazing.
- Remember, if you had fall seeded small grains, these could be grazed before you start your first paddock rotation.



Producers should use growing conditions and forage availability as their guide to determine when to begin spring grazing rather than a calendar date!

Here's a Flow Fact for You!



Water covers about 71% of the earth's surface. 97% of the earth's water is found in the oceans (too salty for drinking, growing crops, and most industrial uses except cooling). 2.5% of the earth's fresh water is unavailable: locked up in glaciers, polar ice caps, atmosphere, and soil; highly polluted; or lies too far under the earth's surface to be extracted at an affordable cost. 0.5% of the earth's water is available fresh water. It is very important that each one of us does our part to protect and conserve our water resources. A good way to begin is by getting involved in community efforts to clean-up and prevent pollution in your watershed. You can volunteer to clean up rivers and streams or mark storm-drains in your community. Remember, your entire watershed area has a direct impact on your drinking water!



Winter Assessments of Barn Lots and Livestock Feeding Areas

As we are coming out of winter (hopefully) now is a great time to do a bit of observation work around the farmstead. Two areas of the farmstead I want to focus on in this article are the lots next to barns and other buildings, as well as the areas where livestock were feed this winter. What are we looking for? **Mud!**

I think for us in this part of the state, mud is a more critical component of winter than snow. It's also more critical to our livestock and their comfort and production. Let me ask you, how many times have you gotten off the tractor to open a gate so you could put out a big bale for the cows only to bury a rubber boot nearly to the top in mud? Or, how many passes with the tractor between buildings does it take before you have ruts so deep that water stands in them all winter? Now, think about the cows you are overwintering and maybe even calving in those bale feeding areas; how tough do you think it is on them to wade mud up to their hocks just to get to the hay ring? In that case, they expend extra energy just to make the trek to the hay ring, energy they could be using to stay warm or resources they could be putting toward having a healthy vibrant calf. And think about that little calf; you spent the night up with his mother just to getting him delivered and the next morning the first thing he does is to follow her into that muddy mess as she heads to the hay bale. And after that, what does he get when he is ready to nurse? A mouth full of nothing but mud from a caked teat on his mother's udder.

If those statements brought visions to your mind, ask yourself this; "Is that what's happening on my operation?"

So, how do these situations (and others) have a relationship to the 14 Mile Creek/Goose Creek Watershed project? The answer is pretty simple and a lot clearer than the mud we are talking about. What is mud? It's soil particles that have been super saturated with moisture to the point that they form a thick sticky slurry. In the case of "farm mud" it's probably safe to say that soil particles and water aren't the only components of mud; there can also be some animal feces and urine mixed in with the original components. If we have conditions that favor the creation of mud we generally have run-off, especially here in southern Indiana with our sloping terrain. With that run-off comes the soil particles that cause sediment in the creeks and streams, erosion in the fields and lots, and run-off of the animal wastes that result in both nutrient loss and water quality issues (usually resulting from E.coli).

With that answer, the 14 Mile Creek/Goose Creek Watershed Improvement Project can provide financial assistance to landowners to address these and other problems on the farm that could be a headache and could be affecting water quality. In the case of the hay feeding area for cattle, a producer might consider installing a feeding pad with direct access from a travel way. That way the farmer and the cow both benefit. In the case of the barn lot area and ruts full of mud and water, a roof runoff system might be the answer. In both these cases, cost-share funds are available for land owners in the watershed area to install these best management practices and others that address water quality issues.

Take a look at these pictures and see if you could benefit from a new practice that might eliminate mud from your operation next winter.



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