Conservation News

Coles County Soil and Water Conservation District

6021 Development Drive, Suite 2, Charleston, IL 61920

Phone: (217) 345-3901 ext. 3 **Email: info@colescountyswcd.org**

http://www.colescountyswcd.org **facebook.com/ColesCountySWCD**

Volume 61 Issue 2

Sandra Cooper Wins At National Photo Contest For Second Time

Sandra Cooper of rural Oakland, has been a participant and frequent winner in the local Coles County SWCD photo contest for years. Recently though, her photos have garnered attention at the national level, bringing in awards in the "Conservation Across America" category in the National Association of Conservation District's national-level contest in both 2019 and 2020. Congratulations Sandra! Her winning entries from both years (at right) feature an Amish farmer and team of horses working in fields.

Cooper's "Baling Hay the Old Fashioned Way" finished in the top 2 at the NACD photo contest in 2020.

Cooper's "Four Horsepower Farming Still Getting It Done" finished in the top 2 at the NACD photo contest in 2019.

2021 Contest Open Until May 5th

Are you an amateur photographer residing in Coles County who would like a chance to enter your photos in a local, state, and nationwide contest? The Coles County SWCD is sponsoring a conservation photo contest to recognize individuals whose pictures are worth more than words!

In addition to the chance to win at the local level, local winners will be entered in the statewide Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation District Auxiliary Photo Contest. Winners at the state level will then be submitted to the National Association of Conservation Districts photo contest. Entries must be received by May 5th to be considered for this year's contest.

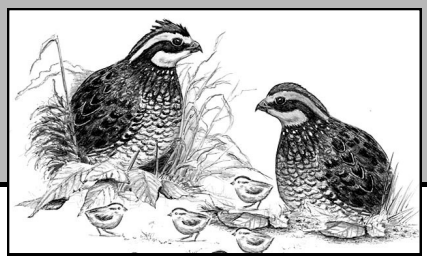
Photographs can be entered in the following categories:

- **Conservation Practices**
- **Close-Up Conservation**
- **Conservation in Action**
- **Conservation Across America**
- **Youth**: Submissions from a photographer up to 18 years of age, which must fit into one of the above categories.

Complete rules and entry forms are available at http://www.colescountyswcd.org/events/annual-photo-contest/

Upcoming Events:

April:	May:	June:
1st—Fish Sale Pick Up	1st—S.T.A.R. 2020 Field Forms Due	8th—Board Meeting
9th—Tree Sale Pick Up	5th—Photo Contest Submissions Due	
13th—SWCD Board Meeting	7th—Native Plant Sale Orders Due	
22nd—Earth Day	11th—Board Meeting	
30th—Arbor Day	17th-21st—Native Plant Pick Up	
	31st—Memorial Day Obs. (Office Closed)	



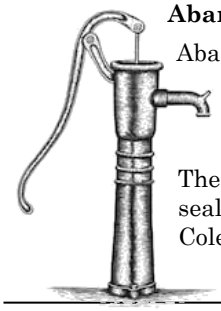
Delay mowing of roadsides and waterways from May 15th-Aug. 1st for ground-nesting birds… Don't Mow, Let Them Grow!

Well Water Programs

Nitrate levels have been rising in Illinois' drinking water. Shallow rural wells are particularly vulnerable to nitrate contamination. Nationally, 20% of these wells having exceeded the level considered safe by the U.S. EPA. Public water utilities are required to test their water for nitrate, but if you own your well it is up to you to make sure it is safe.

10-Contaminant Test Kits

Finding high levels of nitrate in your water is an indicator that your well may be receiving surface water and is more likely to be contaminated with other chemicals. The Coles County SWCD sells well water test kits that test for 10 contaminates for only $30.



Abandoned Well Sealing

Abandoned wells pose a threat to public health since they provide a direct pathway for contaminants to enter groundwater. Groundwater is a source of drinking water for thousands of the people in the area, so protecting it is a priority. Additionally, they are dangerous! When abandoned wells are left open, children, animals or even adults can fall into them, causing injury or death.

The Coles County SWCD accepts applications for financial assistance to help offset the cost of having a well sealed whenever funds are available. Got an open well on your property? Give us a call! All residents within the Coles County Soil and Water Conservation District who have a well that is no longer in use are eligible to apply. Contact our office at 217-345-3901 ext. 3.

USDA Announces 2021 CSP Application Deadline

Champaign, IL -- State Conservationist, Ivan Dozier announced the submission deadline for Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications to be considered for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2021 is May 7, 2021. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) plans to invest up to $7.85 million for new CSP contracts in fiscal year 2021 in Illinois.

CSP is a financial assistance conservation program which helps agricultural and forestland producers take the conservation activities on their farm to the next level. "CSP continues to be a very effective tool for producers working to achieve their conservation and management goals," said Dozier.

While applications are accepted throughout the year, interested producers should submit applications to their local NRCS office by May 7, 2021, to ensure their applications are considered for 2021 funding.

CSP provides many benefits, including increased crop yields, decreased input costs, wildlife habitat improvements, and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP is for working lands including cropland, pastureland, and nonindustrial private forest land. CSP assists agricultural and forestland producers build on existing conservation efforts while strengthening their entire operation.

Producers interested in CSP should submit an application (NRCS-CPA-1200 form) to the local NRCS field office or through the Farmers.gov website using their account. A blank NRCS-CPA-1200 application form may be obtained from the local office or on the Illinois NRCS website. Producers wishing to use Farmers.gov, can sign in or create an account by clicking on "Sign up" in the upper right of the website.

CSP applications submitted by May 7, 2021 will be evaluated by the local NRCS field office staff. NRCS staff will work with applicants to assess their land and resource concerns, answer ranking questions, and determine program eligibility. If an application is ranked high enough to be funded, NRCS staff will work with the applicant to develop a contract.

For additional information about CSP, contact your local USDA service center or visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/il/programs/financial/csp/.

Charleston Field Office Staff and Directors

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As a cooperator of NRCS, SWCD must provide reasonable accommodations to USDA customers with disabilities, where appropriate. Individuals requiring reasonable accommodation for any NRCS or SWCD programs or services should contact Carzella Pritchett, Illinois NRCS' Disability Emphasis Program Manager, at (217) 353-6651 directly. Determinations on requests for reasonable accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis. USDA-NRCS/SWCD are an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Landscaping with native plants increases biodiversity

Biodiversity commonly refers to the distribution and abundance of plant and animal species within an ecosystem (US Forest Service 1989).

Biodiversity provisions us with foods and materials, it helps regulate natural phenomena such as the water cycle, it inspires cultures to create art, and it supports vast ecosystems. In other words, biodiversity allows us to live healthy, happy, and productive lives.

Unfortunately, we're abusing this natural support system. As of 2009 in the US alone, more than 3,400 species of alien plants have invaded over 200 million acres. Over 40 million acres has been planted to lawns. Up to 33,000 species of plants and animals are now imperiled – too rare to perform their role in their ecosystem. One-third of our nation's birds are endangered. We directly threaten biodiversity through habitat loss, spread of non-native species and diseases, and over-harvest. We also indirectly threaten biodiversity through pollution and climate change.

You can play a part in protecting the biodiversity of your local community by creating backyard wildlife habitat that provides food, water, and shelter. The core of your backyard habitat should be native plants. If you have enough space, native trees and shrubs are great! For smaller yards or even apartment patios, native grasses and flowers can provide food and habitat for birds, pollinating insects such as bees and butterflies, and more!

The Coles Co. SWCD is selling a large variety of native plants through May 7th that can be used to create a biodiverse backyard habitat. Design help and other resources may also be available. Give us a call!

Coles County SWCD
2021 Native Plant Sale

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Phone : _____

Email: _____

Return order form with payment to:
Coles County SWCD
6021 Development Drive, Suite 2
Charleston, IL 61920

<u>Important Dates:</u>
Orders Due: May 7th
Pick Up: May 17-21st
at Coles Co SWCD Office
Please remind me prior to pick up:
☐ Phone ☐ Email

Plant Key:

~ tolerates partial shade
* great for rain gardens, wetlands, pond edges

Visit our website or Facebook page to see a catalogue with pictures and full descriptions of each species, sunlight and moisture requirements, and other planting tips!

- species availability subject to nursery supply -

Common Name	Qty.
~Nodding Pink Onion	
~Leadplant	
~Columbine	
*Milkweed, Marsh	
Milkweed, Prairie	
Milkweed, Butterfly	
*Turtle Head	
~Prairie Coreopsis	
Pale Purple Coneflower	
*Bottle Gentian	
Western Sunflower	
~*Blue Flag Iris	
*Water Willow	
*Prairie Blazing Star	
~*Cardinal Flower	
*Allegheny Monkey Flower	
~Wild Bergamot	
~Foxglove Beardtongue	
~Jacob's Ladder	
~* Black-Eyed Susan	
Wild Hairy Petunia	
Little Bluestem	
*Three-Square Rush	
Royal Catchfly	
Aromatic Aster	
~Ohio Spiderwort	
Plant Count	
x $2.50	

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A picture is worth 1000 words!

Photo Contest Open Until May 5th

The Coles County SWCD's annual photo contest is back! Photographs can be entered in several categories. Complete rules and entry forms are available on the Coles Co. SWCD website.

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