

# Conservation Conversation

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## Showcasing on the Kaskaskia River

The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual ‘**Showcasing on the Kaskaskia River**’ will be highlighting the Kaskaskia River from Carlyle Lake Dam to Lake Shelbyville Dam. The event will be held on August 18, 2008 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the American Legion, 321 S. 7<sup>th</sup> St. in Vandalia. Sponsors are the Carlyle Lake Association, Inc. (CLA) and the Kaskaskia Watershed Association, Inc. (KWA). The theme this year is “**Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow**” The morning session will include many displays showcasing the uniqueness in this area. Featured speakers will discuss: the Water Resources Development Act, and its implications for the Kaskaskia, developing wildlife habitat, future changes in the Carlyle Lake watershed landscape, coal mining in Illinois, and the Army Corps erosion study done on the Kaskaskia River between Carlyle Lake and Lake Shelbyville. Lunch will be provided



at the American Legion. In the afternoon there will be bus tours. One tour will go to **Buck Stop Archery** near Brownstown, owned by Jon and Leah Washburn. Tour participants will learn how landowners are taking positive steps to develop and manage habitat for wildlife with food plots, prairie, tree and shrub plantings, and wetland design and management. The second tour will be to the **Vandalia State House**. Vandalia served as the capital of Illinois from 1820 to 1839. The Vandalia State House was constructed in 1830. The tour will tell the story of the times and Abraham Lincoln in his early years in politics. To register for the program, please call the Fayette County SWCD 618 283-1095 ext. 3 before August 11, 2008. There is a \$10.00 registration fee. You can also email your reservation to [karen.sanders@il.nacdnet.net](mailto:karen.sanders@il.nacdnet.net) or mail it to Fayette County SWCD 301 South 3rd Street, Vandalia, IL 62471.

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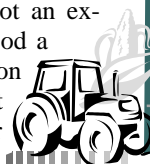
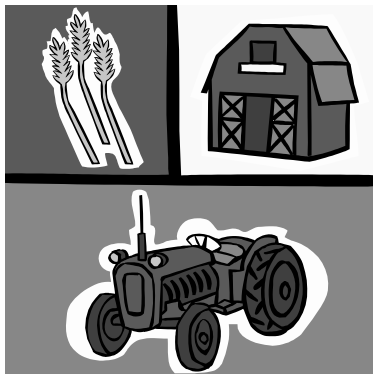
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## Economics of Farming

By Tony Pals

There is an old saying: “The only thing constant is change.” That certainly applies to farming – especially now. Grain prices are up, but so are seed, fertilizer, and fuel costs. Not to mention the rising cost of equipment. Then there’s the increase in the costs of everything else that everybody has to purchase to exist – food, clothes, and, well, just about everything! It seems to be getting harder and harder to make ends meet. Now I’m not an economist, or a farmer, but it looks like there are several ways farmers can cut the cost of production, leaving more net profit. A lot of farmers put on the same amount of fertilizer every crop rotation, when soil tests may show a need for less – or no fertilizer. Again, I’m not an expert, but if you can raise as good a crop with less of that \$1000 a ton fertilizer, it looks like your net profit would go up. Another

possibility to decrease input costs is to reduce the number of trips across the field before planting. In fact, if a person no-tilled his crops instead of making numerous tillage operations burning \$4.50 diesel fuel, it looks like you could greatly decrease your cost of getting a crop in the ground, and increase the bottom line. What’s really cool is that, through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), you can get up to \$90 per acre to apply fertilizer according to University of Illinois recommendations and no-till on up to 400 acres. You need to come in and talk to us about the details. There is a little bit of paperwork involved, but we’re talking about the possibility of \$36,000! Plus you will be working into a new system that will show you that you can decrease fertilizer application and trips across the field without sacrificing yields.



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**Nelsie's News**

*By Nelson Torbeck*



After a spring of wet, cool weather, we finally got the crops planted, replanted, and filled in the drowned out spots. We thought March and April were cool and wet, how about June? It would rain every little whip-stitch. About the time it would dry a little, it would rain again. We had over four inches one time. I'll tell you, the south 40 looked like a lake! I'm surprised as much corn came up as it did. David had to replant the corn at our place, and then fill in a few places. And the ground was hard, even the garden was solid. I think I know why. You remember that earthquake we had? When you fill a bucket with dirt, and then shake it, the dirt settles, doesn't it? I'll bet that's what happened. Speaking of gardens, this is the worst looking garden we've had in a long time. Even the radishes and onions weren't very good. We planted the sweet corn twice, and still didn't get a good stand. There hasn't been as much corn planted as usual, it just got too late. It will be a late harvest the way it is. I'll say one thing, the farmers got busy when it finally got dry. They went to planting soybeans, putting up hay, combining wheat, to planting double crops all at the same time. Oh well, that makes the days go by faster. We could use some rain now. I wish we had some of the water that ran down the creek in May and June. I heard that north of I-70 had a good rain last week. The north part of the county had four inches; we had four tenths. The farmers around the rivers have really got a problem this year with the levee breaks. There will be a lot of acres that don't get planted this year. So far we haven't had much wind and storms around home. But talk about wind, Salem had a storm last Fri-

day. John's lost a lot of big limbs. Granny and I went Saturday to help clean up. We took one tree down, and most of another. That's different in town – we didn't have a tractor or a four wheeler. We just had to drag the limbs by hand. You can't burn certain times, then the fire has to be out by 6:00 PM, so we brought the bigger limbs home with us. We've got a lot of wood split up for the shop for next winter. I'll be able to spend a bunch of time building toys. Varmint report: we were visited by two coons, one snake, no skunks, and no possums. Let's see, grandkids. Jordy had a week of basketball camp in Salem. The high school coach and team have a camp for the grade school boys every year. Jordy did good. He was camper of the day. I don't know what that is, but it got him a six pack of soda, and a Hot Shot Trophy for the week. He enjoys the camp, and I think it does him a lot of good. Jaron is going to Rome this summer, his Aunt Alicia is taking him. Tim and Travis are working – that and going here and there. Those guys are busy as beavers, always on the go. CTI (where Tim works in Taylorville) had their annual open house the other Saturday. Travis did the grilling – hotdogs and hamburgers. They always have a big crowd. The price of gas keeps going up, along with everything else. I heard that the price of food is going up because of the flooding along the Mississippi. They (whoever they are) use any excuses to raise prices. Question: Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker? The old saying: If little ears shouldn't hear it, big mouths shouldn't say it.

**The Economics of SWCD's**

*By Tony Pals*

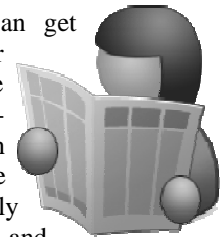


Now we need to discuss the economics of SWCD's. If you recall, we had only received one-fourth of our grant allocation from the Illinois Dept. of Agriculture through three-fourths of the fiscal year. We eventually got all of our allocation, but things were getting close. We were making plans on

how to close the office, and things we could do to put off that closing as long as possible. Now the Governor has proposed cutting over half of the amount for districts in the FY 2009 budget. It is rumored that he would like to do away with grants to districts altogether in the 2010 budget. It's sure been a challenging couple of years. It's not a certainty that these cuts will occur, but, we again need to look at ways to reduce our operating costs in case it does happen. Karen may not be able to make as many presentations at the schools this year. Conservation education is an important part of what the district is about, but the materials she uses are a cost we can cut. And speaking of education, we will again have to



rethink our newsletter. If we can get enough people to read it off of our website, we can continue putting one out every two months. The newsletter is a very important education tool, but it costs \$1500 each time we send one out. If we can significantly reduce the number we have to print and mail, we may be able to continue them six times a year. Otherwise we may have to cut back to quarterly or less. Go to our website and check it out. The address is: [fayetcountyswcd.com](http://fayetcountyswcd.com). They actually look better online in full color, as opposed to the printed two colors. If you like it on line, email Karen at her address given on the website. She will then send you an email every time she posts the next newsletter on the website.



We will be looking for other ways to cut costs, and also other ways to get additional income. In the mean time, if you get the chance to contact your legislators, you might mention the importance of continued funding for Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Personal contacts from their constituents definitely influence their decisions.



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### Conservation Calendar

<u>August 2008</u>	<u>September 2008</u>
18 - Kaskaskia Watershed Showcase 21 - Board Meeting	1 - Labor Day 9 - Steve Henna's Birthday 16-17 - Conservation Field Day's 22 - Autumn Begins 25 - Board Meeting

### Conservation Plans *By Tony Pals*

This is just a reminder. The 1985 Farm Bill defined Highly Erodible Land (HEL). Fields with over a third having the soil type, slope and slope length to have the potential for serious erosion were given the classification HEL. Every field that met that criteria then had to have a conservation plan developed on them. If you didn't follow that plan you could lose farm program payments. Those rules still apply today. You still need to have a conservation plan on all of the highly erodible land that you farm. You also need to be following that plan. An HEL Plan involves committing to a certain rotation and tillage system, usually at least one year of no-till. If you don't follow that plan, you could jeopardize all of the farm program benefits you receive – not just the ones on that particular farm. Also, if you pick up additional land to farm, it is your responsibility to



check with our office about which fields are HEL, and to develop a plan on those fields. I don't want to sound like I'm giving a sermon here, but, you know how much money you receive through the USDA office. It's just not worth taking a chance on losing that. Yes, I know a lot of your neighbors may not be following their farm plan either, but NRCS does do a percentage of spot checks on farms every year. You want to be following your plan if your farm gets pulled. It's important to be following your plan anyway, because that plan keeps the soil loss on those HEL fields at (or at least close to) the tolerable soil loss limits. Also, if you are planning on clearing any land, stop by the office to make sure it's not HEL or wetland. If you have any questions, please give us a call.

The Fayette County Soil & Water Conservation District does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability. This policy covers all programs, services, and procedures of the district, including employment.