

Conservation Conversation

SWCD DIRECTORS

Jake Hortenstine
Chairman

Susan Holdeman
Vice Chairman

Gale Meseke
Secretary

Steve Henna
Treasurer

Matt Runge
Director

DISTRICT STAFF

Tony Pals, RC
Karen Sanders, AC

NRCS STAFF

Mary Ann Hoeffliger, DC
Scott Smith, SCT

Annual Meeting

By Tony Pals

Well, its almost that time again – Annual Meeting. It is scheduled for February 19th at the American Le-



gion Hall here in Vandalia, with registration beginning at 6:00 PM. The meal will be catered by Good Old Days Family Diner in Brownstown. The entertainment this year is the Birds of Prey from the World Bird Sanctuary, and there will be a change in our usual agenda. The Birds of Prey will be presented right after the meal, so all the kids attending to see them can get home at a reasonable hour. Therefore, if you would like the kids or grand-kids to see these beautiful creatures

up close, but don't think they would last the entire evening, this would be your chance. We even have kids' meal tickets available this year. Adult tickets remain \$10.00, but kids four to eight can get in for \$6.00, and

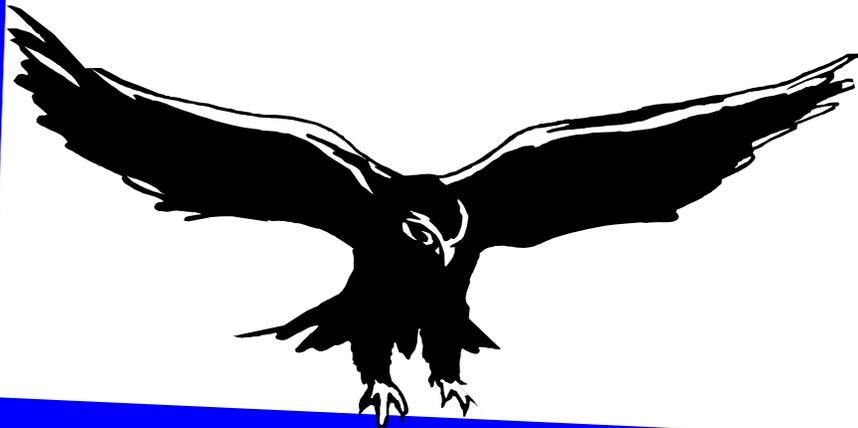


anyone under four gets in free. Then, if you need to take them home after the birds are done, we understand. After the entertainment, there will be the usual election of directors and presentation of awards. Then

there are, of course, lots of door prizes. Please email or phone Karen with your reservations (karen.sanders@il.nacdn.net and 283-1095, ext.3). You can both pay for, and pick up your tickets at the door, but reservations give us a better idea of how much food to order. See you there.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Annual Meeting	1
Tree Sale	2
District Finances	2
Nelsie's News	3
Quail Buffers	3
Renewing Fresh Water	4



Tree Sale

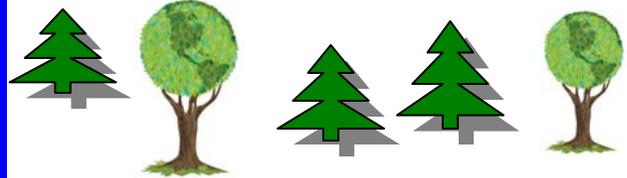
By Tony Pals

Our tree sale continues. If you are reading this, you have navigated to our website. On the page that comes up first, there is a tab towards the top for "Tree Sale". If you click on that, Karen gives you a good description of the varieties we have available this year, and an order form to order your trees. She will send you a confirmation when she gets your order. Since that information is already available at this website, there is no need for me to repeat that here. I might mention the importance of trees – for Fayette County and for the planet. Every tree planted locally provides food and shelter for wildlife, while holding the soil in place and improving water quality. I probably don't need to remind you of that. If you are reading this, you are already interested in conservation, and know about the above mentioned benefits of trees, but its time to start thinking of global benefits. Global warming can be stopped only by the actions of nations, but we can all do our



little part to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide sent into the atmosphere. Recycling, turning down the thermostat in winter and up in summer, reduced driving are all things that help. Another is planting trees. A single tree can keep up to a ton of carbon dioxide from getting into the atmosphere over its lifetime! That's amazing to me. All we have to do is buy the trees and spend a little time planting and, maybe, watering them, and we have helped wildlife, soil and water conservation, and the future of our planet for the next fifty to a hundred years.

What a deal!



Update on District Finances

By Tony Pals

It has been an interesting couple of months in Illinois politics since our last newsletter, that's for sure! Has any of it changed the financial situation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts? My best answer is I'm not sure. The state legislature reinstated the nearly half of the grant funds for district operations that had been cut in the original 2009 budget. But, just because the money has been put back in the budget does not mean we will get those funds. The money has to come from some place, and, like the saying goes, "You can't get blood from a turnip."

We did get some good news this week—we are going to be getting our second quarter alloca-

tion as soon as the vouchers can be processed.

It is obvious that the state legislature sees the importance of SWCDs and has fought hard to keep our funding. A grant to pay for district employees' health insurance was not restored, but may be in the spring session. It looks like there may soon be new leadership in the executive branch. How much that will affect our financial situation is yet to be determined. I know the current Lieutenant Governor is very interested in clean water issues, so that can't hurt. Only time will tell.



Nelsie's News

By Nelson Torbeck

Well, it's a good day to be sitting in the house writing the newsletter article. It is cold, and it is windy. That makes for a nasty old day, but it is January. The weather people say it is going to be colder the end of the week—down in the single digits. I don't care for that. When it's this cold, I don't even go in the shop. I can't get anything done except put wood in the stove. When I was growing up, that shop was our house. As a matter of fact, I was born there, in January at that. I'll bet it was cold then too. I go in the shop most days. Seems like there's always toys to make or something else to do. I enjoy working with wood, but, I have to admit, I wish the weather was a lot warmer. I always feel sorry for the livestock people when it's this cold and windy. Seems like that's when things go wrong—water freezes up, the tractor won't start, or something. It's lambing time at Scott's. They were lucky to have a couple of sets of twins before the cold snap. So much for the weather. It's been cold, and there's nothing we can do about it. Jordy is still playing



basketball, but it's getting to the end of the season. They have won a few games. I'll say one thing, they are fun to watch. Sometimes it gets exciting. He's got a game tonight and a scholar bowl meet this afternoon. Those scholar bowl questions are hard.

I guess there have been a lot of things happen since I've been in school.

Not much going on for the varmint report. I guess the skunks are sleeping, although we did see one along the road last night. We have been seeing more coyote around here lately for some reason.

When Tony called to remind me to write an article, I told him it would be short. I didn't realize it would be this short, but, let's face it, not much is going on this time of year.

Here's a question for you: why is the time of day with the slowest traffic called "rush hour"? The old saying: "Old folks know more about being young than young folks know about being old."

Quail Buffer Funds Still Available

By Tony Pals

I just got a printout from Marcia in FSA. It's hard to believe there are still about 11,000 acres of Quail Buffer available for signup in Illinois. These buffers can be from 30 to 120 feet wide and go around field edges generally next to fencerows and



woods. These are areas where we still spread the expensive fertilizer, and plant the expensive seed to grow almost nothing. The CRP rates have gone up in the county to where most soil type rental rates are now

\$127 or higher. You'll get that payment for 10 years, plus about 90% of the cost to establish the native grass and forbs mixture required to be seeded. The buffer needs to be planted when you're busy planting crops,

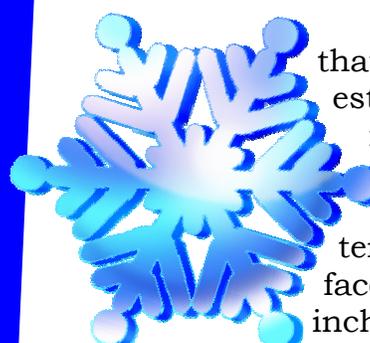
but the district can order the seed for you and have it stored, line up the spraying, and get the acres seeded. Think about it. It creates habitat for quail and makes sense financially.

Renewing Fresh Water

By Della Moen, Earth Team Volunteer, NRCS/Stephenson Soil and Water Conservation District

Snow falls silently covering everything in site – a visual portrait of a watershed. What does not evaporate and return to the clouds as water vapor will eventually run off over or under the ground renewing our fresh water supply – just as rain, sleet, and hail do.

Lately we have experienced the fact that snow can fall even at incredibly cold temperatures. Snow can occur if there is moisture in the atmosphere and some way to lift or cool the air. Since air can hold more water vapor at warmer temperatures, heavier snowfalls usually occur at 15 degrees F or warmer. Besides needing moisture for snow to form, the temperature of the atmosphere must be at or below freezing. The snow reaches the ground only if the temperature at ground level is at or below freezing.



Snow has qualities that make it more interesting than some other forms of precipitation. When snow accumulates, air temperature at its surface (the top 12 to 18 inches) controls snow temperature. When snow is deep, the snow closest to the ground is warmer because it takes its temperature from the ground. The ground retains some of its summer warmth because snow is a good insulator. Fresh snow is composed of 90-95 percent air trapped among the lattice structure of the snow crystals. The trapped air can barely move so heat is not readily trans-

ferred away from the ground.



Sound travels differently because of the snow. When there is a thick layer of light fluffy snow, sound waves are absorbed by the snow and sounds are more muffled. Strong winds can make the surface of the snow smooth and hard or crusty. When this happens sound waves are reflected and become more clear and travel further.

Sometimes snow makes a crunching sound. “A layer of snow is simply composed of ice grains with air in between the ice grains. Because the snow layer is mostly empty air space, when you step on a layer of snow you compress that layer – a little or a lot, depending on how old the snow is. As the snow compresses, the ice grains rub against each other. This creates friction or resistance; the colder the temperature, the greater the friction between the grains of ice. The sudden squashing of the snow at lower temperatures produces the familiar creaking or crunching sound. At warmer temperatures, closer to melting, this friction is reduced to the point where the sliding of the grains against each other produces little or no noise.” National Snow and Ice Data Center.

The snow cover serves as a reminder that we have a responsibility to manage the precipitation that renews freshwater in such a way that our water supply is not harmed.

This information and more can be found at <http://nsidc.org/snow//faq.html>.

