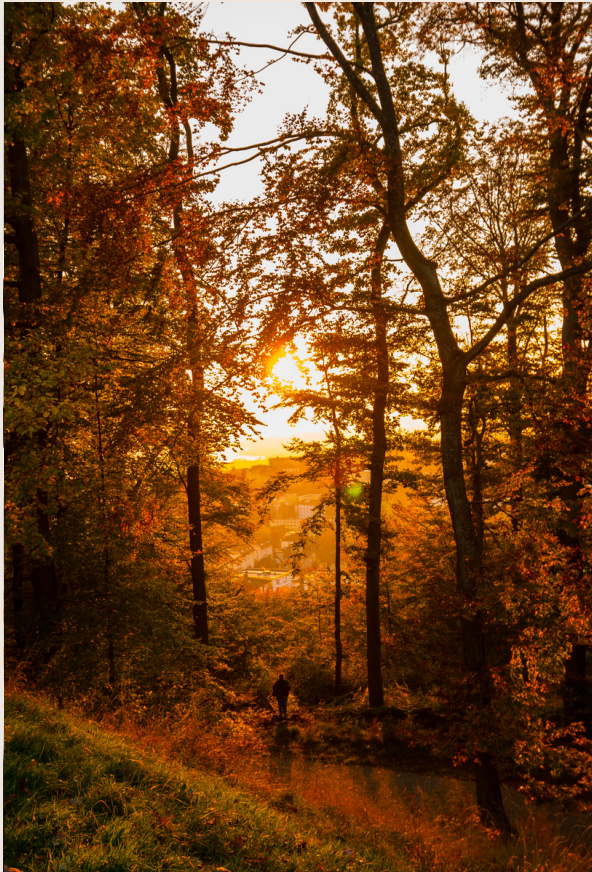


CONSERVATION CONNECTION



MACON COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT NEWSLETTER



MACON COUNTY SWCD BOARD

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P: 217-877-5670 EXT 3
WWW.MACONCOUNTYSWCD.NET
 3342 NORTH PRESIDENT HOWARD
 BROWN BLVD. DECATUR, IL 62521

UPCOMING EVENTS

**14
SEP**

FISH SALE ORDERS DUE
(CARP ORDERS DUE 9/2)

**23
SEP**

FISH SALE ORDER PICKUP
AT SWCD OFFICE

**21
SEP**

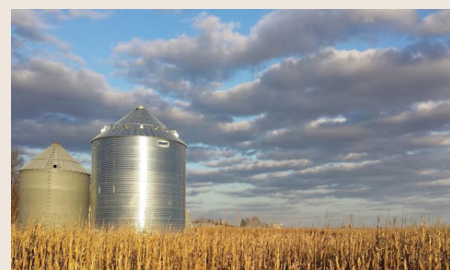
TREE SALE ORDER FORMS
DUE

**30
SEP**

TREE SALE ORDER PICKUP
AT SWCD OFFICE

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FIGHTING WIND EROSION	- CHASE BROWN



MCSWCD UPDATES

Macon County SWCD |

ANNUAL MEETING 2027 - 80 YEARS!

Earlier this year you may have joined us on February 26th to discuss the district's operations, accomplishments, and future. We are appreciative of the opportunity to celebrate conservation in Macon County and are looking forward to seeing you all again this coming February to celebrate the district's 80th Anniversary! Join us as we shed light on conservation done by those before us and look forward to what is ahead. Events like these are made possible by our sponsors. Thank you for considering partnering with us to conserve Macon County's natural resources!

A date for the 2027 annual meeting is yet to be set so be on the lookout for an official announcement. Until then pencil it in for February and we will see you then!



FALL FISH AND TREE SALE

Be sure to take advantage of our fall fish and tree sale this season. The fish sale includes game and management fish as well as pond supplies. The tree sale includes blooming trees, maples, oaks, walnuts, evergreens, larger trees, and fruit trees. See insert for more information.



Interested in becoming an associate member of the Macon County SWCD Board?

Our board is made up of 5 individuals with a vested interest in natural resource management and environmental stewardship.

As an associate member, you would have the opportunity to participate in local conservation.

Call 217-877-5670 X3

DIGITAL FALL NEWSLETTER

Help us go green! To help reduce printing and mailing costs while also conserving natural resources, the Macon County SWCD is exploring the possibility of transitioning our **fall newsletter** to a digital format in the future. While no changes have been made yet, we are encouraging anyone that would prefer to receive their newsletter by email to make the switch now. If you would like to receive your newsletter by email, you can subscribe to it at our website or you can call the office with your name and email address. You will continue to receive all the same district updates, event invites, sale information, and conservation news but instead will receive it conveniently to your inbox. Thank you for choosing to help us reduce paper waste all while staying connected to local conservation!

LET'S STAY IN TOUCH!

Follow us on Facebook-Macon County Soil and Water Conservation District

Visit our website-www.maconcountyswcd.net

You can also subscribe to our email newsletter on our website.

LOOKING TO PURCHASE NATIVE SEED?

The Macon County Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to partner with Pheasants Forever to provide for you native seed mixes for all of your needs. All mixes are special formulated to meet NRCS specifications and include CRP practice specific mixes. Contact the office to discuss what would be best suited to meet your goals.



FIGHTING WIND EROSION



Since the dust storms of this past spring the district has received many questions as to how they happen and what can be done to prevent them. The reality is that when exposed soil surfaces with limited residue cover meets high winds the result can sometimes be dangerous soil movement for roadways and neighboring property, especially during spring tillage time. Following the major dust storm on I-55 a few years back, IL state NRCS

released a special EQIP fund pool specifically for practices that reduced the risk of wind erosion and primarily featured no-till, reduced-till, and permanent plantings (windbreaks, hedgerows, etc.). Statewide SWCDs have also begun amping up local work group reporting to submit to state NRCS the concerns of farmers, landowners, conservationists, and other invested parties. Wind erosion was one of the more pressing concerns our group had and the compiled report from SWCDs in the area and statewide reflected this as well.

In terms of reducing the risk to wind erosion, some of the practices that are recommended that have positive affects on wind erosion include managing surface residue with reduced tillage and no-till systems, increasing the amount of soil covered with cover crops, and establishing permanent windbreaks, hedgerows, field borders, and other protective barriers at the field edge.

To make choosing these practices more feasible, technical assistance is offered by both SWCD and NRCS. The main distinction lies in the producer's intentions. If they are looking to experiment with some of the practices listed above, the SWCD's Partner's for Conservation Program is a good option as it involves single year contracts. PFC offers 75% cost share on all practices that are billed and pays \$30/ acre for strip-till/no-till with no acre cap. PFC operates with a substantially smaller fund pool but works well for trying something new on a few fields. Where NRCS programs shine is their focus on whole operation concerns and long-term, repeated effort. CSP provides a payment over 5 years to support the continued utilization of conservation practices while EQIP often functions like PFC in its use for incidental purposes including engineering projects.

1006NT 10 FT END WHEEL NO-TILL DRILL AVAILABLE FOR RENT

Looking to do some interseeding or other falltime small-scale planting? Macon County Soil and Water Conservation District has a 10FT No-Till Drill available for rent. \$100 per day with a \$100 cleaning deposit. Contact the office for availability and to complete a rental agreement form!



WHEN HAIL LEAVES MORE THAN BROKEN CROPS

LESSONS FROM THE JUNE 17, 2026 STORM

FARM CREDIT ILLINOIS CROP INSURANCE
JACK YOUNG, VP CROP INSURANCE, DECATUR
MICHELLE MAYFIELD, VP CROP INSURANCE, SHERMAN
GARRETT STEPHENS, VP CROP INSURANCE, TAYLORVILLE



On Wednesday, June 17, 2026, a severe hailstorm swept across portions of central Illinois, leaving a path of destruction through farmland surrounding Niantic and Illiopolis unlike anything many producers could remember. Long-time farmers, agronomists, crop insurance adjusters, and local residents all shared a similar reaction: they had never seen hail damage of this magnitude.

Fields that only hours earlier represented the promise of an excellent crop were suddenly reduced to little more than rows of standing stalks. Entire corn plants were stripped of nearly every leaf, leaving only bare stems with little hope of recovering enough to produce an economical yield. Soybean fields suffered equally devastating damage, with plants shredded or completely defoliated. In many cases, the damage stretched for miles, affecting entire farming operations rather than isolated fields.

For many producers, this was not simply another weather event, it was a situation they had never experienced before.

As reports of damage began pouring in, one of the first calls many farmers made was to their crop insurance agent. Before making any management decisions, producers needed to notify their Approved Insurance Provider (AIP) by submitting a Notice of Loss with their agent. This step begins the claims process and ensures that damage can be evaluated before any changes are made to the crop.

Once the immediate reporting was complete, attention quickly turned to a far more difficult question: What do we do now?

Should the corn be replanted? Could the damaged crop be destroyed and soybeans planted instead? Should the crop be left to recover and taken to harvest? Or should it simply be failed and managed accordingly?

Unfortunately, the timing of the storm made many of those options difficult. By mid-June, the calendar was working against producers. Replanting corn would significantly reduce yield potential.



Switching to soybeans after destroying the corn crop also presented its own economic and agronomic challenges. Even leaving the crop alone offered no guarantee that enough leaf area remained for the plants to recover.

Revenue Protection (RP): Protecting Revenue, Not Just Yield

The majority of corn and soybean acres in central Illinois are insured under a Revenue Protection (RP) policy. Revenue Protection protects against low yields, low prices, or a combination of both using the producer's Actual Production History (APH). Producers commonly choose Enterprise Units (EU) or Optional Units (OU), each with different claim implications following localized hail events.



Where Crop Hail Coverage Can Make the Difference

Many producers also purchase a private Crop Hail policy with optional Wind coverage. Unlike Revenue Protection, Crop Hail adjusts each planted field separately, making it especially valuable during isolated hail events such as the June 17 storm. Producers also select an Insurance Per Acre (IPA) that can reflect either their investment in the crop or its potential value.

Planning Before the Storm

The June 17, 2026 hailstorm reminds us that crop insurance is much more than a financial product, it is a risk management strategy. The right combination of Revenue Protection and Crop Hail coverage provides producers with options when severe weather strikes.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR ARTICLE AUTHORS!

Macon County SWCD is thankful for partnership with others in conservation, people who are experts in their fields.



COVER CROPS

Macon County SWCD |

SPRING PLANNING = FALL SUCCESS

CHASE BROWN - MACON COUNTY SWCD BOARD CHAIRMAN

In the spring, many farmers headed to the field with their corn planters with the last thing on their minds being their cover crop plans this fall. However, it's never too early to be thinking about cover crop plans and managing for success. Whether you are new to cover crops or a veteran, a game plan is critical, and a plan that is adaptable based on the season is imperative. Here are 10 things to think about now so you can reap the rewards of a great cover crop.

Winter Kill vs Spring Kill

The cover crop you decide to plant can depend on whether you want it to winter kill (Oats, Radish, Turnips, Buckwheat) or if you decide to let it come back in the spring and terminate it mechanically or chemically (Cereal Rye, Annual Ryegrass, Wheat). There are benefits to both. However, spring terminated often takes a bit more management and preparation.

Seed Availability

Cover crop seed can be very variable based on weather conditions in other parts of the country or from unplanned demand regionally. Ordering your needs early and taking possession can never hurt and can often result in better pricing. As demand spikes, supplies can get tight and often prices reflect that. Find a trusted dealer that understands cover crops and what your goals are. There is more to it than just selling a bag of seed.

Government Program Compliance

Often producers just getting started in cover cropping take advantage of government cost share programs. If doing this, know what the rules and regulations are and let your seed supplier know. A pound of seed is not the same as a pound of pure live seed. Better to have the conversation before you discover it after the fact and are not in compliance.

Application Method

There are multiple options for seeding cover crops. If utilizing a winter kill species, it is important to get it in late August or early September which typically means flying it in. If using a more winter hardy mix that can go

on after the cash crop comes off, you have more options like broadcasting it with dry fertilizer, drilling it, or using a vertical tillage tool to incorporate the seed. Knowing what your cover crop seeding window is can help you decide which method is best and get it organized before the chaos of fall comes.



Following Cash Crop

Knowing that certain cover crops can have a negative effect on the following cash crop can really dictate what a producer seeds. Typically the biggest problem is when a producer uses a high carbon cover crop such as cereal rye in front of a corn crop. The large amount of biomass requires a lot of nitrogen to break it down and as a result robs the corn of much needed nutrients. Knowing a cover crop's carbon:nitrogen ratio can help avoid very costly yield drag in corn.

Incorporating Livestock

If livestock is a part of an operation, that producer has an advantage over a producer without livestock. Cover crops make incredible feed and can lower an operation's input costs. While the cows are grazing, they are also helping add nutrients to the field. It's a win/win for the operation. If livestock are to be used, there are



cover crop varieties available that produce more tonnage and higher quality feed.

Herbicide Restrictions

As the war on weeds marches on, producers are using higher rates and stronger residual herbicides. Many of these herbicides can still be present in the fall and cause severe injury to young cover crop seedlings. Check the label or talk to your chemical rep to find out what you're applying in the spring/summer might do to your cover crop in the fall.

Find Support

Cover crops can be a challenge and overwhelming to a beginner. Reach out and find an expert to help mentor you, whether it is someone from NRCS, the Soil and Water Conservation District, a local farmer or a seed salesman. Beginner mistakes can result in expensive failure and a frustration that ends the journey to soil health.

Start Small

If a producer has never tried cover cropping before, don't start with the whole farm year one. Pick out a few farms to try them on and really learn how the system works. It can be very intimidating for someone when they get in a wet spring and don't have experience with cereal rye getting as tall as the tractor and they can't get it all killed. Help your stress level and crawl before you run.

Be Patient

Cover crops can help improve things from year one; however, that is not their sole purpose. Cover crops are one part of an entire soil health system. Things do not just happen immediately, so be patient and find a way to benchmark progress on your farms. Think of cover crops as putting money in a soil savings account for the next generation.

COVER CROPS CAN BE A REWARDING PROPOSITION IF A PRODUCER LOOKS AT THEM LONG TERM AND REALLY LEARNS TO UNDERSTAND HOW THEY WORK WITH SOILS AND WHAT THEY ARE DOING ON THEIR FARMS. SOIL IS A LIVING BREATHING THING, AND IF WE HELP FEED LIFE BELOW THE SOIL, IT WILL IN TURN GIVE US BACK LIFE ABOVE THE SOIL.