

Fall 2011

Council Appoints New Leader

John Hulewicz will be taking over the position of Council president with **Dwight Fish's** resignation.

Thank you Dwight for sharing your time and talents with Wood-Land-Lakes.

Thank you John for your dedication in leading the Council through these challenging times.♦

Accept the Challenge . . .

Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D has received a donation challenge. An anonymous donor would like to match all monetary donations to Wood-Land-Lakes (up to \$500), received by the end of 2011.

Please help us raise at least \$500, which will then be doubled to \$1,000 by this generous donor. The funds raised will be used to support our mission, "volunteers working together for responsible stewardship of our natural resources."

All donations are welcome and greatly appreciated. Please make checks payable to Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D and note "donation challenge" on the memo line, and mail it to the office (155 Lane 101 West Otter Lake, Angola, IN 46703).

Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D is a section 501(c)3 nonprofit; therefore, your donation may qualify as a charitable deduction for federal income tax purposes (please consult your tax adviser or IRS).♦

The Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D office has been relocated to Par-Gil Natural Resources Learning Center in LaGrange. The office will be staffed only a couple of days a week and Council members and staff will continue to work from their homes. In order to respond to correspondence and phone calls in a timely manner, our address and phone number will be that of our clerical assistant's home:



Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D
155 Lane 101 West Otter Lake
Angola, IN 46703

(260) 665-7723
office@wood-land-lakes.org



Why is Wood-Land-Lakes Interested in Converting Brownfields?

by Mike Yoder, Wood-Land-Lakes Land Trust Chairman

One of the keys to protecting and preserving our community's most valuable asset, farmland, is to create and maintain livable urban areas. Cities, towns, residential areas, business zones, and industrial zones need to be well-planned in order to utilize the land as efficiently as possible. However, because America is a vast land, we have never faced the same land availability constraints that many other countries in the world face. It has always been cheaper and easier to move into a greenfield area to build new, rather than deconstruct, clean up, or redesign an old, outdated, or polluted site. We have always had plenty of land and the market economics of limited planning and zoning ordinances make greenfield development much more attractive for business investors.

This concept of plenty has resulted not only in urban residential sprawl but also industrial and manufacturing sprawl, leaving in its wake abandoned downtown business districts and industrial areas. Many times these industrial sites have existing ground or ground water pollution problems because the businesses operated prior to environmental regulatory operating rules.

It is challenging for many communities to adopt strict planning rules; thereby, forcing brownfield or abandoned properties to be redeveloped before new greenfield areas are approved for any type of expansion. These communities find themselves at an economic disadvantage because the brownfield areas are too expensive to redevelop by private businesses. Private industry always has a choice of where to locate or where to expand - that choice is many times driven by the basic cost of land and construction. Unless a brownfield area can be made to be as cost efficient to locate to as a greenfield area, companies will choose communities with greenfield areas ready for development and avoid the brownfield areas.

In recent years, the value of farmland has increased because many communities now desire to maintain open space to preserve or create a more livable community. Also affecting farmland value may simply be the pure economic driver of a hungry world and the need to double food production in the next 40 years - with the current amount of farmland available. Additionally, the concept of making our cities more livable and a growing understanding that we need to create more sustainable living patterns, communities are now focusing more resources on brownfield redevelopment activities. Federal and local resources are being committed to these efforts.

The result is old abandoned manufacturing sites are experiencing a rebirth, old residential neighborhoods are being renovated, and communities are once again learning the value of a vibrant downtown district. The most critical and important result is valuable farmland is no longer being turned into manufacturing or residential areas, just because it was the easier and less expensive land to convert.♦

Brownfields Grant Awarded

Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D was one of several partners working with **Region III-A Development & Regional Planning Commission** to secure an EPA brownfields assessment grant. The nearly \$1 million grant will be administered through the **Northeast Indiana Economic Development District**.

The local **Brownfields Assessment Coalition** will be concentrating on hazardous substance assessments, petroleum assessment, and will also assist with the remediation and redevelopment planning of brownfields in northeast Indiana. "We don't anticipate a release of funds from EPA until after October and then we will identify and prioritize the assessments," said **Kristine Christlieb**, Community Development Planner with Region IIIA. "After the sites are determined and given permission by property owners to proceed with the assessments, we will work with them to administer the grants as needed," Christlieb added.

"This is an excellent example of how greater partnerships and collaboration can and will benefit the regional economy and quality of life in northeast Indiana," said **David Koenig**, Executive Director for Region III-A.♦

President's message to all our friends, volunteers, and readers of this newsletter:
by John Hulewicz, President

Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D is currently planning for 2012. We have committed to be around for a long time but we will now have a sharper focus on preserving our natural resources.

You can help us by doing any one of a number of things, but for starters, you can help us minimize our newsletter mailing costs by utilizing emails as much as possible. This newsletter goes to approximately 900 folks, and of those, only about 300 go by email. If we could get that "snail mail" down to less than 300, we could cut our mailing cost in half and dedicate those monies to preserving our natural resources. You folks are important to us and we want to keep you informed as to what Wood-Land-Lakes is doing. Please take a moment of your time to email us at office@wood-land-lakes.org with your email address so that we can reduce those mailing costs (please include your name, address, and phone number as well). If you no longer want to receive the newsletter, let us know that also.

Wood-Land-Lakes is always happy to have active and engaged volunteers that have an interest in preserving and maintaining our natural resources. If you would like to volunteer your time, do not hesitate to contact us. Any other donations to assist our mission will be graciously accepted.♦

Protecting Farmland into the Future

Indiana's heritage is deeply rooted in agriculture; however, as people continue to migrate out of the city into rural areas, farmland is being fragmented and lost. Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D's Land Trust is interested in protecting farmlands, woodlands, wetlands, prairies, pasturelands, and wildlife habitats from development and subdivision. This is accomplished through a farmland conservation easement.

A conservation easement is a voluntary, written agreement between the landowner and Wood-Land-Lakes in which the landowner has decided to restrict the use of the land by donating their development rights; thus, protecting the land from further subdivision or development. The landowner retains ownership of the land.

Wood-Land-Lakes is obligated to monitor the property to be sure that the land is not developed or divided. Wood-Land-Lakes will ensure that the property owner's wishes are upheld indefinitely, even if the land is sold or given to someone else.

Hugo Martz protects his farm with a farmland conservation easement. Working in Valparaiso, Martz knows all too well about the urban and suburban encroachment upon prime farmland. Martz states, "Once land is developed, its use for agriculture is gone forever."♦



Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D is successful due to the support of Volunteers, Contributors, and Sponsors. . . .

Individuals

Bob Ledgerwood	Kathy Latz
Brian Campbell	Kayleen Hart
Brian Musser	Leslie Raymer
Dave Hess	Lucy Miner
Dawn McCreery	Marcia McNagny
Diana Clingan	Martin Franke
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John Hulewicz	Rick Meyer
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LaGrange County Lakes Council

Sponsors

DeKalb County Soil & Water Conservation District
LaGrange County Soil & Water Conservation District
Noble County Extension
Steuben County Commissioners
Steuben County Extension
Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District

Consider making a donation to Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D in **Memory or Honor** of a friend or loved one. What better way to honor an outdoor, nature loving person than to contribute to an organization that will help improve the natural environment that he or she holds so dear! We will notify the honoree or family of your donation.



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www.wood-land-lakes.org

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Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D Council Members

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Barbra Frymier **Don Moore** **Sharon Gerig**
Bill Schmidt **Karen Fairfield** **Steve Provines**
Dave Dolezal **Lucy Miner**

This newsletter is a publication of Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D, a non-profit organization. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter or have an address change, please contact our office.

All meetings of Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D, serving DeKalb, Elkhart, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, and Whitley Counties, are open to the public. Anyone who wishes to attend will be welcome. For assistance with new projects, please contact a Council member or the office to have your name and project placed on the agenda. Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, political beliefs, or family status.

**With a farmland
conservation easement**

. . . . long after we are all gone, the land will continue to be used for agricultural purposes and not have become a site for residential, commercial, or business development.

. . . . people who preserve land with a conservation easement may enjoy federal tax benefits because the IRS considers it a charitable contribution, even though the property owner maintains ownership of the land.



Upcoming Events

Updates at www.wood-land-lakes.org

- Sept. 30** **Indiana Master Naturalist Merry Lea Tour & Geology Lesson**
Friday, September 30, 2011 - 9:45 am to 3:00 pm
Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center
Wolf Lake, Indiana
Contact: Jody Heaston at (260) 824-0926 or jheaston@dnr.in.gov
- Sept. 30 & Oct. 1** **Indiana Master Naturalist Gathering**
Friday & Saturday, September 30 & October 1, 2011
Fox Island County Park
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Contact: Jody Heaston at (260) 824-0926 or jheaston@dnr.in.gov
- Oct. 15** **Indiana Lakes Management Fall Forum**
Saturday, October 15, 2011 - 9:00 am to 2:30 pm
Lake Missionary Church
Angola, Indiana
Contact: Steuben County Lakes Council at (260) 665-1730 or office@lakescouncil.org
- Oct. 27** **Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D Council Meeting**
Thursday, October 27, 2011 at 4:00 pm
Location to be Announced
Contact: Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D office at office@wood-land-lakes.org